

Assumption University

DEC 10 1955

RENAISSANCE

A Critical Journal
of Letters



The Catholic
Renaissance Society, Inc.

Vol. VII No. 4
Summer, 1955

RENASCENCE

RENASCENCE is published quarterly by the Catholic Renaissance Society, Inc., to promote literary criticism and to evaluate contemporary literature.

EDITOR: JOHN PICK

Editorial Associate: Spire Pitou

Editorial Assistant: Dick Coanda

Editorial Advisers:

Victor M. Hamm, Marquette University

Sister M. Camille, O.S.F., College of Saint Teresa

Renascence Forecast

Irish Letter (Patrick Casey)

Christopher Fry (Sister Maura)

Sean O'Faolain (Neville Braybrooke)

Symbolism in Brighton Rock (F. A. McGowan)

Two Meanings of Symbolism (W. K. Wimsatt, Jr.)

Indexes to Volumes I-IV are available

Renascence is indexed in the Catholic Periodical Index.

Yearly subscription: four dollars. Each issue: one dollar. Payable to Executive Director, Catholic Renaissance Society, Inc., Mount Mary College, Milwaukee 10, Wisconsin.

All correspondence about publication of articles should be addressed to the Editor of Renascence, Marquette University, Milwaukee 3, Wisconsin.

Second-class mail privileges authorized at Milwaukee, Wisconsin

RENAISSANCE

A CRITICAL JOURNAL OF LETTERS

Vol. VII, No. 4

CONTENTS

Summer, 1955

Paul Claudel: Prison and the Satin Slipper	Barbara Selna	171
Shape of the Lightning: Randall Jarrell	C. E. Maguire	181
Paris Letter	Fernand Vial	187
Review-Article:		
Literature and Christianity	Spire Pitou	196
Book Reviews:		
<i>Agamemnon</i>	Peter J. Seng	202
<i>Gertrud von le Fort</i>	John Devlin	205
<i>Pages choisies, L'image dans l'Eve de Péguy</i>	Leo Maynard Bellerose	206
<i>Une voix sur Israël, L'Évangile d'Isaïe, Le Symbolisme de La Salette</i>	Lewis Delmage, S.J.	208
<i>Dante in Licenza</i>	Francis J. Lodato	209
<i>Les fontaines de l'abîme</i>	Spire Pitou	210
<i>Renunciation as a Tragic Focus</i>	Hugh Dickinson	213
<i>Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel</i>	Thomas J. Beary	215
<i>Le Couple chrétien</i>	Sister Francis Ellen Riordan	216
<i>L'Art Sacré Moderne, Art Sacré au XXe siècle</i>	Ralph March, S.O. Cist.	219
<i>Leopards and Lilies</i>	Helen C. White	220



RENASCENCE is published by
Catholic Renaissance Society, Inc.

Officers and Members of Board of Directors:

President, Francis X. Connolly	Fordham University
Vice-President, Rev. Victor R. Yanitelli, S.J.	Fordham University
Treasurer, Sister M. Rosenda, O.S.F.	Alverno College
Secretary, Sister M. Aquin, O.P.	Aquinas College
Executive Director, Sister M. Loyola, S.S.N.D.	Mount Mary College
Chaplain, Rev. Norman Weyand, S.J.	Loyola University, Chicago

Sister M. Camille, O.S.F.	College of Saint Teresa
Sister Gertrude, S.P.	Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College
Mother Grace, O.S.U.	College of New Rochelle
Victor M. Hamm	Marquette University
Sister Mary St. Irene, B.V.M.	Mundelein College
Brother Abdon Lewis, F.S.C.	Manhattan College
Francis J. Lodato	College of Mount Saint Vincent-on-the-Hudson
Sister Maria Lucy, C.I.M.	Immaculata College
H. Marshall McLuhan	University of Toronto
John Pick	Marquette University
Ernest Sandeen	University of Notre Dame
W. K. Wimsatt, Jr.	Yale University

Paul Claudel: Prison and the Satin Slipper

BY BARBARA SELNA

PAUL CLAUDEL challenges readers and spectators of the *Satin Slipper* to an understanding of the picture he paints—a picture “whose subject is everything.” In his preface to the English translation, he warns that the drama is unified wholly in one point, a “vital *punctum* which centres everything.” But he seems skeptical that anyone will find the *punctum*. His translator, John O'Connor, reports the amazing subtleties of the drama to have been “hopelessly missed by many . . . critics.” Still, Claudel challenges every reader to “look out for it, and please don't be angry if it slips between your fingers like a flea.”

Now, is it not a likely suggestion that the vital *punctum* which measures everything—the symbol which centers the exuberant variety in the drama—is the prison? Of course the prison symbolism is not new. The conqueror in *Tete d'or* finds his freedom in God only when wounded to death and nailed to the ground. Leota, in *La Cantale à trois voix*, proclaims happiness “une forte prison.” In *Partage de Midi*, men discovered God when besieged in a fort near death. *L'Otage* revolves around a Pope whom Napoleon holds captive.

Men are captives of their bodies, of goods, of marriage when it dulls into a prison of complacency, and, frequently Claudel shows human love shaking them from contentment in their captive life, discovering incompleteness, sowing anguish in them, but eventually luring them to “the snares of God” through “His tortuous ways.” This general preoccupation of Claudel with the paradox of freedom, following one's own will which issues in slavery and imprisonment in God's will which brings freedom, has long been recognized. It is, in reality, another way of saying, “He who secures his own life will lose it; it is the man who loses his life for my sake that will secure it” (Matt.10:39). In the *Satin Slipper* and elsewhere, Claudel concretizes this same truth by means of the prison symbol (in Frédéric LeFevre's *Sources de P. Claudel*, 1927). He defined the play as “énorme drame en quatre journées, mélange incongru de bouffonnerie, de passion et de mysticité et qui touche à des points assez obscurs de l'âme et de la pensée.”

The unity of the “énorme drame,” with its level of meaning, becomes clearer when the play is viewed in terms of the prison symbol.

In the *Satin Slipper*, action, poetry, characters, theme, scenery are all

RENASCENCE

related to the central symbol of prison. The theme underlying the action of the play is the ransoming of prisoners of passion, of selfishness, of ignorance; prisoners of imperial tyrants, and walled dungeons. The poetry of the play employs the prison image about twenty times; this is at least as frequently as any other single image occurs, except for the sea (called "the chief actor in the whole drama"), which occurs more than thirty times.

And the play is framed structurally by the symbol: the opening and closing lines speak of prisons. Also, the changes of atmosphere within the play depend upon the progress made in the ransoming of prisoners. This is most evident at the beginning of the Fourth Day, after Prouheze has been ransomed from all finite prisons by death, but it is also evident elsewhere.

Not only are the action and the poetry of the *Satin Slipper* centralized in the prison symbol, but the important characters exemplify types of prisons. These characters may be classified in two sets (cf. *infra*) according to the two kinds of prisons which Claudel treats. The themes of the drama also refer to a type of prison. These themes are stated in the two parts of the epigraph—which is given importance by the fact that it stands alone on a separate page of the programme: "God writes straight with crooked lines" (a Portuguese proverb) and "Even sins" (St. Augustine). St. Augustine's phrase derives its meaning from its connotative association with St. Paul's "everything helps to secure the good of those who love God, those whom he has called in fulfillment of his design" (Rom.8:28, Knox tr.). Both "sins" and "crooked lines" refer to the prison of created goods when sought as ends in themselves. This notion will be clarified when we examine closely the realities symbolized by the prison—the meaning behind the symbol.

Finally, even the physical scenery, especially in the crucial scenes, employs prisons. Some of these important scenes which take place in prisons of one kind or another will be listed here. (This list is made in order of occurrence; Roman numerals refer to the Days, Arabic numerals to scenes). (I,1) The Jesuit priest, Rodrigo's brother, is fettered to the mast of a sinking ship—this loss of freedom is a kind of imprisonment. Dona Isabel (I,5) is guarded behind iron bars. Prouheze (I,5) is held captive under the strict guard of Pelagio and Balthazar. Prouheze and Musica (I,10), both imprisoned physically under Balthazar's guard, claim to be mutual spiritual prisoners of each other. That this inn in which they are held captive is intended to be a prison is proved by the stage description: "In one corner, the fortified porch with a heavy door, studded with nails and bolts and fastened with iron bars." Honoria and Pelagio (II,3) speak of Prouheze's imprisonment: "Time was when my lady would have been provided for [in] a very good strong prison." And Prouheze's struggles to be free are described as being like those of "a crazy creature who escapes from prison on all fours like a

PAUL CLAUDEL

beast across the ditch." Again (in II,4) Prouheze and Pelagio are captives. In both (II,9) and (III,10) Prouheze is Camillo's prisoner in the fortress of Mogador. The double shadow (II,13) is stamped upon a wall. Walls make a prison. Hence the shadow seems imprisoned. The moon (II,14) which speaks as it shines upon the same wall, is also confined there. (III,8) Prouheze is tied to the fish line of her guardian angel, and so deprived of freedom. Finally, in the last scene of the drama, Rodrigo is imprisoned in chains.

THE prison symbol is relevant, then, to action, poetry, characters, theme, and scenery of the *Satin Slipper*. But more important than the symbol is its meaning. The meanings are many and paradoxical, and require some knowledge of Claudel's philosophy in order to be understood.

First, the prison symbolizes a threefold dependence of creatures: a) dependence on the Creator, b) dependence upon other creatures, and c) the dependence of the human spirit upon matter. The first dependence is necessary and will always be so, for creatures, as the very word expresses, are not self-sufficient. In Claudel's terms, this dependence upon God, when fully accepted, brings freedom. The prison of the inter-dependence of creatures is shown in the play by man's need for human companionship, and by his reliance upon angelic guidance. Finally, flesh is a type of prison for man's spirit, since matter limits spirit; i.e., it confines man to the boundaries of space and time.

The prison, in the second place, symbolizes spiritual privation—the walls of sin, especially original sin. Because of Adam's sin, man lost the perfect order between flesh and spirit which would enable him to live in peaceful freedom. Unruly passions bar him from the freedom of orderly submission to God. This perfect submission, which appears to be a prison, is the sole source of true freedom. Hence the privation of freedom because of sin is the second and chief meaning of the prison symbol.

By using these ideas as a basis of understanding, we can now examine the system of symbols in the *Satin Slipper*. It should be noted, however, that although the symbolism is discussed as if it were fixed (i.e., sun symbolizes A and B always, wind symbolizes C always), this is not the entire truth. Actually, the meanings given here are not the only possible ones, but are those which seem to predominate. Let us consider in turn the symbolism of persons, things, and plot.

The persons in the *Satin Slipper* symbolize the two ways in which men seek freedom. Since all men are imprisoned by the manifold walls of creaturely dependence and of sin, all men seek to be freed from these shackles. On the basis of whether they seek freedom directly or indirectly, Claudel divides his characters. He indicates this fundamental division in the second scene:

RENASCENCE

... there are two roads going away from this *house*.

The one . . . like a neglected skein—bears from here *straight* to the sea . . .

[The other is a] road among the broom and climbing among the scattered rocks . . . [Italics mine]

The "house" is the palace where Dona Prouheze has been confined while her husband was away. From this prison she makes her first attempt to escape. She has a choice of roads—the indirect and the direct routes to freedom. She chooses the indirect, and following this pattern her life as a whole will go along the indirect way (the "crooked lines"). The direct road would have been that of obedience to her husband, but she chooses the other way of elopement with Rodrigo. This road does not lead to God, but scatters her among the broom and rocks of evil.

In the words of the play (III, 7, p. 175, Sheed and Ward's edition of the translation) this indirect-direct road division is explained. Men who choose the direct road which bears "straight to the sea" are those for whom "the understanding is enough. 'Tis the spirit that speaks purely to the spirit." But most men choose the indirect road, "climbing among the scattered rocks." In them "the flesh also must be gradually evangelized and converted." The following two-road division seems, then, to be justified by the play itself:

Those who choose the direct road

1. The Jesuit priest
2. Dona Musica and the Neopolitan Viceroy
3. Don Juan, son of Musica; and Dona Sevenswords, daughter of Camillo, Prouheze, and Rodrigo (duplications will be explained)
4. Diego Rodriguez and Dona Austregesila

Those who climb the rocks of indirection

1. Don Rodrigo
2. Dona Prouheze
3. Don Camillo

Both sets of characters are prisoners, but those who choose the direct road find that, paradoxically, their prisons give them freedom, not misery. For example, the play opens with the thanksgiving of the Jesuit priest who rejoices at his being fastened to the cross of his sinking ship's mast. Although he is physically in fetters, he realizes that he is spiritually free:

... now the day of rest and relaxation is come, and I can yield myself to these *bonds* which fasten me [to] my cross, floating . . . on the *free* sea . . .

Dona Musica is never shown except as a prisoner. Prouheze keeps her captive in the inn (I,10,p. 46); she is imprisoned in the forest after her shipwreck,

PAUL CLAUDEL

since she has not the necessary passport papers (II,1,p. 134). She is known to be quartered (though she is not seen) under bolt and guards at the inn (I,10,p. 49). Although she escapes with her lover, the Viceroy, she says she is still imprisoned, for she calls him her prison: "I have a prison, and no one can get me out of it . . . The arms of the man I love; she is caught, wild Musica!" In the end, then, Musica though always a prisoner, finds freedom through love. This love is the recognition of dependence upon another being. Hence is it a prison but not a confinement to misery. And Musica, by joyful acceptance of her prison of love, finds happiness, God, and freedom.

Dona Austregesila and her love Rodriguez mirror the same paradox. They were separated (imprisoned from each other) by space and circumstances during the ten years of Rodriguez's voyage. When they are brought together they seek God in marriage, finding freedom in joyful acquiescence to His laws. Moreover, there is a freeing even on the physical level, for Austregesila saves Rodriguez from jail by her careful management of his estate during his absence! Dona Sevenswords and Don Juan of Austria exemplify most strikingly the paradox that wills, not walls, make a prison. Although Sevenswords takes her lover to the prison of African oblivion where they ransom captives, this mission gives them freedom. We see this because the mere thought of this African mission frees in Sevenswords such energy that she swims effortlessly from a shipwreck, whereas her Butcher-girl companion, who is imprisoned in thoughts of self, drowns.

Each of the direct travellers, then, finds freedom from mankind's many prisons through joyful acceptance of God's will. By imprisoning themselves in God, as it were, they attain perfect freedom.

THE second group of characters are those who go to God indirectly—by following their own wills at first and only later turning to Him. They are the “climbers among the scattered rocks.” The clue to understanding their way to God is given in the prayer of the dying Jesuit, Rodrigo’s brother:

My God, I entreat You for my brother Rodrigo! . . .
And if he desire evil, let it be such as shall be compatible
only with good,
And if he desire disorder, such disorder as shall involve
the . . . overthrow of those *walls* which bar him
from salvation,
I mean him and that *multitude* with him which he is
darkly implicating. [Italics mine]

The walls of Rodrigo's prison are chiefly ambition, sensuality, and inordinate attachment to Prouheze. The overthrowing of these walls involves multitudes of people; it also involves all the realities and complex symbols of the things

RENAISSANCE

of earth and of the wider universe; the other characters who travel the indirect road; and the whole plot itself.

First the plot: Rodrigo early tries to avoid the governorship of the Spanish royal colonies in America. While confessing his sinful love for Prouheze, his words are interrupted by the battle in defense of St. James in which he is wounded. Since Prouheze would not come to him, even when he was near death, he follows her later to Africa and invites her to come with him to America; she refuses. Meanwhile, his love for Prouheze rises and falls like waves on the ocean: from love of her soul ("Ah, I admire her so much that I have forgotten to look at her;") to love of her whole person ("Did I say it was her soul alone I loved? It is her whole self"), to lust for sensual gratification ("A fig for her soul! It's her body I want"). Finally, Rodrigo accepts the bond of "that great Law which sunders us"; only then does he truly love Prouheze as God's creature. The resulting union of their wills is so complete that the Double Shadow scene (II,13) shows Prouheze and Rodrigo as spiritually married through their mutual love and mutual acceptance of God's law, although this same law and half the distance around the world prevent their physical union.

Next we follow Rodrigo in his world travels. He governs Venezuela where he uses plantation slaves to help as missionaries for the conversion of Japan and China to Christianity. His travels bring him again to Prouheze, and his love again descends to lust, but Prouheze refuses his demands. In stead of giving herself to him, she bequeaths him her daughter, Dona Seven-swords (who, because of Prouheze's transformed love, is also Rodrigo's daughter in the spiritual realm). In this way she tells him of her fidelity to him *in spirit*. Rodrigo returns to sea, perhaps to America, eventually to Japan, then to Europe where he devotes his last years to the service of Teresa of Jesus.

What is the universal significance of this rambling plot? How are its themes illustrated by the Portuguese proverb and St. Augustine's words? How is the action of the drama the ransoming of prisoners? These questions are only answerable through analysis of the things (sun, stars, moon; wind, seas, shadows, walls, lands of the earth) and characters which are "darkly implicated" in Rodrigo's actions.

THE sun stands for the light of God, both as that light is in us through natural reason, and as a greater light is in God, i.e., His justice weighing acts objectively. The sun is natural reason, "this accustomed leaden flame;" "little peering suns"; the "dim little sun going off and on" in Manchiavallo. In other places the sun is God's objective light of justice, for example, where, speaking of Prouheze, the Moon says: "Poor plant! Has she not had enough to do all day to defend herself against the sun?" (She is here defenseless

PAUL CLAUDEL

against the objective law which forbids her to marry Rodrigo.) This same meaning for the sun is in: "A man cannot go wrong who takes the sun for guide"; and: the n. p. of life is the "way of the sun."

In conjunction with the sun, the stars symbolize the perfection of creatures who participate in God's light; therefore they refer to the angels and saints. Prouheze's Guardian Angel is a star over Japan. St. James is a constellation. The stars are the "peopled heavens." When Prouheze dies she will be a guiding star to Rodrigo and others—a star "flaming in the breath of the Holy Spirit." Finally, since every person is potentially a saint, there is in every person "that star in the deeps of her which she is without knowing."

The last symbol in this class is the moon. It is not merely a symbol, but the explicit voice of the light of God's mercy. In the moonlight, "all creatures together, all beings . . . are drowned in the compassion of Adonai." The sun shines upon surface events, but the moon illumines the inner being of creatures, even as mercy penetrates to man's true motives. Thus while Rodrigo and Prouheze are forbidden to marry by the light (sun) of God's just law, nonetheless they are spiritually wedded in the moonlight of God's mercy. As the Moon says:

There is no question of her body! But this sacred throbbing by which the commingling souls know each other without go-between,—that is what I serve to manifest (II, 14, p. 129).

The basis in physical reality of this symbolism is clear. The sun and stars revolve in the firmament as dependent entities. The moon revolves around the earth, serves the earth, as it were. Likewise, justice, natural law, and reason have an independent splendor, whereas mercy is revealed only when it serves a creature in need of that mercy.

The first in the next set of symbols—things on the earth—is the wind. It is implicitly and explicitly referred to as the will of God: "The Will of God will blow upon us"; "there is another Wind, I mean the Spirit, which is sweeping the nations." The sea refers to God as the Alpha and Omega of all creation, and to the spirits of lovers who are separated in the flesh. Its reference to God is pointed in various places, i.e., "the sea comes first and the land is in it . . . The infinite water on every side," and "everything hangs together at sea"; the sea is the source of music and beauty, of harmony and creativity—as evidenced most strongly in the Fourth Day. It relates to the separated spirits of lovers most explicitly in Prouheze's mental conversation with Rodrigo across the ocean. They desire to be united, but since she cannot give him her body she at least gives him her spirit, so that "the two seas which seek to mingle their waters" can be one. Through her penances she wants to be "the drop of water uniting the seas."

Another symbol which refers to the spirits in love who are separated

RENASCENCE

by law and by physical space is the shadow. Thus when Prouheze and Rodrigo are truly united in will with God, Claudel depicts their love in the Double Shadow scene (II,13,p. 126). The shadow on the wall speaks:

I charge this man and this woman with leaving me masterless . . .
whose shadow can they say I am? Not of this man or of this woman
singly,

But both of them . . .

Also the monks, one in spirit, are only physically separate, and therefore their shadows are united (IV,6,p. 267).

Wind, sea, and shadow, then, refer either to God as source of freedom or to spirits imprisoned only by physical obstacles—not by their own recalcitrant wills. Moreover, the sun, moon, and stars refer either to God as source of freedom, or to man as free. There remain two last symbols: the walls and the lands of earth. These show man imprisoned not only by physical obstacles (space, time, mass) but and primarily by rebellious will. This rebellion, or disorder, is shown in the various forms of human respect, pride, selfishness, despair.

The symbolism of walls as mere physical obstacles is inconsequential. But walls as obstacles to man's will are crucial. Prouheze is called a wall because of her pride and physical passion. She is "that proud lady whose head droops and crumbles piecemeal like a wall." Rodrigo is imprisoned in the walls of sensuality; he is "a captive beast worried by the gadfly . . . between two walls . . ." These walls are barriers to consciousness, so that "every wall that is removed is like the broadening of consciousness." Walls also make "the prison of helplessness and despair."

The most extensive symbols, however, of inordinate will as a prison to man's spirit are the lands of the earth. Each country seems to stand for some disorderly passion. America, for example, is greed for money and sinful desire. She is, to the King of Spain and others, that "copper-sided female" and "that double purse." For Rodrigo, America symbolizes sinful desire; it is the "boundary between this sea and that other" and the sea frequently refers to the spirits of Prouheze and Rodrigo. Moreover, Rodrigo explicitly equates America with his flesh:

Isabel: . . . are you tired of our America? Have I not heard you
often say . . . that she was like your own body?

Rodrigo: One gets tired of one's own body.

Japan is the prison of self complacency, that is, man's mistaken resting in finite goods that cannot satisfy his infinite desires (for examples see, III,8,p. 167; IV,2,p. 227; and the speeches of Rodrigo with his Japanese servant, during the Fourth Day). Germany is the prison of gluttonous flesh. This meaning is explicit in St. Boniface's speech (III,1,p. 137).

PAUL CLAUDEL

Finally, Africa represents, with Japan, the prison of complacency with the finite; and along with America it is the prison of spirits separated in the flesh. Examples of the latter are numerous, e.g., (III,8,p. 171) "Hagar in the desert." The symbolism of Africa as contentment with nothingness is revealed in Don Camillo, the Arch-African and representative of all the Africans ransomed in the play; in his voice Africa speaks: "Let Him remain God and let Him leave us to our nothingness . . . Him in His place and us in ours forevermore, Amen."

All the things of earth and wide universe, then, refer symbolically to God, source and end of freedom, or to prisons which keep men from God. The seeming prisons of space, time, law, matter, are not prisons when used rightly. Every creaturely limit, joyfully accepted and reasonably used, is, paradoxically, not a prison but a means of freedom.

THE plot may now be seen as a whole in terms of the prison symbol. As has been said, the movement of the plot concerns Rodrigo's conquest of the world. This is a panoramic mission to ransom captives: captives of ignorance in America and Japan; captives of physical torture in Venezuela; and it is in order to escape from Rodrigo that Prouheze ransoms slaves in Africa. The inner movement of the plot also concerns Rodrigo's conquest of his spiritual world. This involves the ransoming of "that multitude with him which he is darkly implicating." For, as his Jesuit brother foresaw, "he is one of those who cannot be saved except in saving all that mass."

And just as the physical conquest of the world may be considered not as a discovery of new lands, but as a reunion of divided lands, so also in the spiritual conquest it is not a question of achieving new freedom for man, but of returning him to his original freedom. This comes out in the angel's speech about Rodrigo's mission to Japan: "It was not a matter of discovering a new world, but of finding the old one which was lost . . . not a new district of the universe, 'twas the reunion of the earth." When this reunion is accomplished man will have "the fine perfect apple [which is] the globe . . . where there is order, is Paradise." And the ordered Paradise belongs to both spiritual and physical levels of reality. Through the sin of Adam—the eating of the forbidden apple—freedom had been lost. Through the spiritual ransoming of prisoners the apple is restored, the integrity of the earthly Paradise ("the fine, perfect apple") is regained.

Rodrigo moves towards this paradisaical order through many vicissitudes—from his purpose early in the play "to conquer and possess all he can," to the realization that "perfection . . . is evermore bound up . . . with worship . . . and the preference of something other than self and with giving." In this movement he accomplishes the "overthrow of those walls about him which

RENASCENCE

bar salvation." And in his salvation he involves a mass of people, but chiefly the other two travellers by the indirect road—Prouheze and Camillo.

When the play begins Prouheze is a proud Spanish noblewoman, dissatisfied with her marriage, willing to tempt both Camillo and Rodrigo. She loves life, "the world, Spain, this blue sky, the goodly sun!"—all the created gifts—but she does not consciously love God himself. She dreads adultery because such a sin would mean "betraying Africa . . . and the honour of my husband's name," but again she misses the essential point: that sin betrays God. She loves Rodrigo wholly; she would sacrifice her soul for him. When her angel asks her to choose between God and Rodrigo she chooses the latter. But before she dies she strips herself of created affection and bids Rodrigo follow her in renunciation. She makes herself God's prisoner to such an extent that she is not free to loose herself, even for Rodrigo: "How speak when I am captive? . . . The Will of Him who possesses me is my will alone, and . . . in that Will it is for you to find me again." Both Prouheze and Rodrigo find union with God and hence with each other; they are ransomed from the false freedom of finite prisons into the seeming-imprisonment of infinite freedom.

Finally, through Prouheze and hence through Rodrigo, Camillo seems also to reach God, although no explicit evidence is given in the play. In spite of Prouheze's inordinate love for Rodrigo, Camillo sees Christ in her and begs her to give Him to him. Perhaps the final line is meant to indicate that Camillo, with the other prisoners of the play, is finally ransomed; for with no introduction to his statement, Brother Leo closes the drama with the unexpected: "Deliverance of souls in prison!" This would seem to include all, for each of the souls in this play is imprisoned.

The prison, then, is the central and unifying symbol in Claudel's *Satin Slipper*, and all of the chief aspects of the play—persons, things, plot—refer to the action of the drama: the ransoming of prisoners. The action occurs on two levels—the physical level of ransoming captives, and the spiritual level of freeing individuals from the shackles of sin. The opening prayer of the Jesuit priest keynotes the drama. Through him, Rodrigo is given grace to attain salvation; and Rodrigo brings with him Prouheze, Camillo, Sevenswords, and the minor characters who follow him.

The wills of all these persons are the crooked lines with which God writes straight. Even their sins serve. The double paradox of the drama is reiterated throughout; namely, that matter, reasonably used, leads to God; and that only total imprisonment of men in the will of God can bring true freedom. Moreover, the play states that the purpose of Providence—of the Will of God in the lives of creatures—is to bring "deliverance to souls in prison." The prison, then, would appear the "vital *punctum* which centres everything."

Shape of the Lightning: Randall Jarrell

BY C. E. MAGUIRE

(Continued from the previous issue)

JARRELL'S organization is frankly dramatic (not narrative) and better adjusted to the short haul. If one had to rate his achievement in the three fields he has so far tried, it might be put this way: his whole interest is in people, and in people in action; his poetry is his best work and tends to the dramatic monologue or the short-short story (or better the one-act play) in verse; his criticism is, as he himself says of Marianne Moore's, an inferior form of poetry, for it consists of reactions, always decided and sometimes violent, to other people's writings as if they were (as of course they are) those Things he always capitalizes; and his novel is a mosaically constructed long dramatic poem in a prose which, by its allusive and metaphorical tone, demands the same close application and has the same gradually unfolding effect as poetry.

The novel, *Pictures from an Institution*, justifies its title. This is another—but not *just* another—of the novels which have resulted from the recent discovery that members of college faculties, and perhaps especially college administrators, are also people. This discovery was made not by the faculty or the administrators or even the students, but by the "creative" writers imported by these institutions to teach their art to the young. Jarrell inserts into his story one of these artists, Gertrude Johnson, who has come to Benton to write her novel (her eighth) and shamelessly regards all her associates as Material. Gertrude's novel, if it ever saw the light, would probably much more resemble Mary McCarthy's *Groves of Academe* than Jarrell's book, for Gertrude casts the proverbially and glacially cold eye on her surroundings, whereas Jarrell is helpless before the helplessness of even so reptilian a character (no, a *person*) as Gertrude Johnson, or so mechanized an administrator (or grown-up little boy) as the President, Dwight Robbins, or such a Convection-of-Sociologists-in-person as Jerrold Whittaker.

One way of distinguishing between the novel and the poems would be to consider Jarrell as writing the novel with his mask on, and the poems with his mask off, but saying very much the same thing, although a previous acquaintance with the poems helps enormously in detecting the overtones of the novel. As a matter of fact, the whole body of Jarrell's writing so far is interlaced with like themes, ideas, quotations and even characters. A simple—perhaps too simple—way of checking Jarrell's chief preoccupations is to trace these repeated themes

RENASCENCE

and quotations and people, or types of people, through his work, treating the whole body of it as if it were one of those mosaic or thematic organizations he mentions.

The structure of *Pictures from an Institution* encourages one to do just this. It is not a story in any sense, except that two of the characters have a beginning, a middle and an end of their career at Benton; but is it the story of Gertrude Johnson and how she used Benton? or of Constance Morgan and how she found the Rosenbaums? Neither of these is engaged in an action, even in Francis Fergusson's explanation of the term; for Constance, though she grows—or does she?—in Perception, has no conscious Purpose and no noticeable Passion; whereas Gertrude, as the author sees her, has plenty of Purpose, and creates obstacles to supplement those which nature has provided for her, but her Passion never leads to any Perception. If I have to choose, I should say Constance is the central character, but she does nothing except listen to the Rosenbaums and to records of *la musique sérielle et dodécaphonique*, and, offstage, file and type and stamp envelopes in the President's office. While she does this, the author, with sometimes loving and sometimes horrible fascination, presents to the reader all the fauna of this almost incredible institution, placing each group in a detailed family background and physical setting, and watching them all affect one another. They never change. They merely progressively reveal themselves. And behind the *dodécaphonique* chaos of this animated jigsaw puzzle rumbles the "old St. Bernard's voice" of Dr. Rosenbaum quoting Goethe: "Man would not be the best thing in the world if he were not too good for this world." The author again, in "Girl in a Library," quotes this at Tatyana Larina; and it is the nearest I have come, in Jarrell's writing, to the expression of a unifying theme. This is the ultimate in value he has reached so far; and most of his work is a kind of ballet in which he confidently or fearfully or despairingly approaches this belief, or else tosses it aside or pretends to toss it aside in exasperation or mock exasperation, as if undecided whether it is man's fault or someone else's that he cannot reach out to something for which he is *not* too good. In his most serious moments, as in the poetry, and in many of the sections of the novel devoted to the Rosenbaums, he is concerned with the meaning of life in its ultimate aspects. At other, lighter moments, he is concerned with comparing the American view of life with the European and trying, without any real satisfaction, to justify the American.

HIS stay in Salzburg has evidently made a deep impression upon him. He not only uses German both in titles and texts until you want to quote at him his favorite line from Henry James: "one cannot help deploring his too extensive acquaintance with the foreign languages," but he shows acutely the effect of having been exposed to a civilization which goes beyond that sense of Fact Americans confuse with reality. In "Girl in a Library," he says: "For

RANDALL JARRELL

nineteen years, she's faced reality: / They look alike already." The gloss on these lines is in the novel, where he says that for a good many of the Benton girls their education was what they themselves would have called a traumatic experience. One of the school psychologists says to Dr. Rosenbaum: "The first thing I do with a freshman is to shake her out of her ignorant complacency," and Dr. Rosenbaum mutters: "God spare us our ignorant complacency." The motto of Benton should be, the author says: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you feel guilty." But the guilt is social guilt, nothing more ultimate. And this insistence on Fact, on the Flo Whittaker communal approach to living, robs the girls of something more precious. What they miss in pursuing facts is "Those sunrise-colored clouds / Around man's head—that inconceivable enchantment / From which, at sunset, we come back to life / To find our graves dug, families dead, selves dying." This is a more central text than it sounds. This "enchantment" is the state, it appears, in which the Rosenbaums have lived; but this is also the state from which they are now—especially Irene, the older of the two—"coming back to life." They have had something which Americans, Jarrell feels, miss; but it, too, has a stop. That is why they are so fond of Constance, why they take her with them at the end: to live vicariously in her still present and flowering enchantment.

This may all sound somewhat misty, but it *is* misty, although it sounds less so in Jarrell's language; and although what he has to say is rarely less than serious, mature and, as has been noted earlier, even anguished in its stretching after truth. His search appears in almost summary form in "Orient Express": "I saw the world / That had seemed to me the plain / Gray mask of all that was strange / Behind it—of all that was—was all. / But it is beyond belief. / One thinks, 'Behind everything / An unforced joy, an unwilling / Sadness (a willing sadness, a forced joy) / Moves changelessly.'" It is even more clear in "Hohensalzburg": "*In the end we wake from everything.* / Except one word / Goes on, always, under the years, / A word we have never understood— / And our life, our death, and what came past our life / Are lost within that steady sound: / Pure, yearning, unappeasable, / The one spell turns above us like the stars."

BUT apart from such revelations, a step below the level where the ultimate is hidden, both the poems and the novel are filled with a lively, optimistic preoccupation with the mystery of being. In "A Game at Salzburg," Romana, / A girl of three, / Sits licking sherbet from a wooden spoon . . . / She says to me, softly: *Hier bin 'i.* / I answer: *Da bist du.*" Then the poet goes home and wanders about in the garden where "the sky / Is for an instant the first rain-washed blue / Of becoming." He looks "Through falling leaves, through the statues' / Broken, encircling arms / To the lives of the withered grass . . . /

RENASCENCE

In anguish, in expectant acceptance / The world whispers: *Hier bin 'i.*" The world and the people in it are always saying just that to Jarrell; and his response is one of respectful, loving interest rather than curiosity; he does not analyze or dissect but watches until the thing or the person shows itself. With Marianne Moore he says (and this is another of the repeated, thematic quotations): "It is not the plunder but accessibility to experience."

The Rosenbaums' views on life and people represent always (but never quite) the ideal of how one should view life and people. Irene, the former singer, still sang occasionally, and when "the song and her voice said: *We are all dying*, something else about her voice—a quality that could not be localized . . . said to you also: *Who ever dies?* . . . Her voice pushed back the boundaries of the world." She was very old, and yet sometimes her voice said to Constance that "life is uncreated and will not be destroyed—said softly, without accompaniment: *Believe, believe, my heart!*" This too Jarrell comes back upon several times. This man and wife have some secret key to life and something beyond life that baffles the American listener and, now and then, makes him—but not Constance—uneasy. Rosenbaum's favorite remark is: "You can do anything with children if you will only play with them." But to him almost everyone is a child; and his managing them in this way implies a subtle disparagement. Gertrude Johnson went in for "impatient rejection of everybody. She had great expectations for humanity, expectations which any human being disappointed; anybody satisfied Gottfried's expectations. The thought of how he had acquired these expectations was a disagreeable one." Yet he was always sincerely tolerant, courteous, affable. Gertrude and Dr. Rosenbaum are almost the two poles of Jarrell's own reaction to people, and Irene's "*Believe, believe,*" which is yet a mere velleity, echoes his own wish. In the same way, he feels that "the Rosenbaums had made up their minds, and that I hadn't." He even admits: "I hated to come to anything so uncongenial, so un-American, as a theoretical conclusion . . . I felt . . . that it is better to entertain an idea than to take it home to live with you for the rest of your life." What he objected to in Europeans was "a hardness and matter-of-factness . . . they brushed life aside as if they themselves were life and could do what they chose about it." Americans, on the other hand, are "sheltered and ignorant," and though they are often "at a loss for long, for long," they can afford to "make concessions, show a kind of tentativeness and forbearance." This helplessness appeals to him, and this tentativeness he judges a virtue. This whole section on the Rosenbaums is a comment on his own writings. The "accessibility to experience" which he approves seems incompatible with thinking "they themselves were life and could do what they chose about it."

We find in "A Conversation with the Devil" a pathetic fiend who accuses the poet of giving up "whatever you're afraid to take, / which is everything";

RANDALL JARRELL

and after that of taking credit "For dreaming something else to take its place. / Isn't what is already enough for you?" He reminds the poet, in the same words Jarrell has used about Gertrude Johnson: "The world divides into—believe me—facts." But later he admits he is obsolescent because he is a "specialist in personal relations." Men have gone him one better. "It takes a man to love or hate man / Wholeheartedly." But the real reason why he has gone out of business, the poet tells us, is that his traffic with men depended on their freedom: "Free will appealed so much to him; / He thought, I think, *If they've the choice . . .* / He was right. And now, to have no choice!" This acceptance of man's lack of freedom explains much in Jarrell's writings, especially his compassion. Like the Christ of Rilke's "Olive Garden," which he has translated, he feels "alone with all men's sorrow," and knows that though "men beseech: the angels do not come." The woman in "The Face," who is "Not good any more, not beautiful— / Not even young," comments: "I thought: If nothing happens . . . / And nothing happened. / Here I am. / But it's not right. / If just living can do this, / Living is more dangerous than anything. / It is terrible to be alive." This is the common experience of many of the people in the poetry. In such a context, one can understand Jarrell's irritation with the little girl whom he took to a Tarzan movie and who kept asking, as each character came on: "Is this one good? Is this one bad?" Such questions are to him irrelevant. But what, then, about his admiration for the moral world of Marianne Moore's poetry?

THE answer to this last question I shall ask is a dangerous one to give because it cannot be exactly documented and must be seen in the context of his whole work; but it is not a new or original answer. Morality for him seems to be that tolerance and compassion which he both admires in the Rosenbaums and practices so well himself; it is necessary among men because without it there is nothing but a dream. Without it, even the dream is shattered. "Ah, love, let us be true / To one another!" he calls out to all men on this Dover Beach which is his world. Man is alone in a hostile world and can only "be true." In "The Tower" he makes a man say: "Lord, I am lonely in this world you made me." The last stanza reads: "But wish . . . What is your life but a wish—a cry / Unheard, unanswered, indifferent? A man plunges / Story on story, past a thousand windows, / Blank eyes of empty offices; or if someone's there, / Why should he look? If someone sees, / Why should he care? And, care or not, / What can he do? The man is falling. / But care while you can: you too are falling." This is Jarrell's world; and he is so at home in it that he misinterprets (I think) Frost's "Neither Out Far Nor In Deep" to fit it. Frost's introductory quatrains show people always turning their back on the land to look at the sea. The last reads: "They cannot look out far, / They

RENASCENCE

cannot look in deep. / But when was that ever a bar / To any watch they keep?" This seems quite simply to mean that man is attracted by the ultimate no matter how little he can understand it. The lines: "The land may vary more; / But wherever the truth may be— / The water comes ashore, / And the people look at the sea," surely indicate this. Jarrell's interpretation is that the choice between land and sea is a choice between the Human and the inhuman. We turn from the known (humanity) to the unknown (infinity) and it doesn't bother us that we can't see very much into the second. "It would be hard to find anything more unpleasant to say about people," he comments, than to note this lack of interest in other people. He ends with a quotation from Empson: "The waste even in a fortunate life, the isolation even of a life rich in intimacy, cannot but be felt deeply, and is the central feeling of tragedy." This is what Jarrell makes one feel in his best work.

For all his complexity, Jarrell is merely a man kicking against the inhumanity of other men in a world where men *must* understand and be kind to one another, because that is all there is. This is not, I think, an oversimplification of what he has to say. It would be a gross dismissal of his excellence as a poet. But the great quantity of quotation in this paper must already have conveyed some notion of his power and importance. His is not surface stuff. It comes to grips with the most important feelings and ideas man can have. It moves on levels deep and high as most modern poets have touched. He is not unaware of the problem of evil, but his compassion for men makes him, on this point at least, rather like Williams of whom he says that "he is as Pelagian as an obstetrician should be: as he points to the poor red thing mewling behind plate glass, he says with professional, observant disbelief: 'You mean you think *that's* full of Original Sin?'" Jarrell cannot believe it. But he has the honesty to say that "the wickedness and confusion of the age can explain and extenuate other people's wickedness and confusion but not, for you, your own." He finds himself agreeing with Elizabeth Bishop that beneath our lives "there is inescapable hope, the pivot," and refuses to share "that horrible relishing complacency with which so many existentialist thinkers insist upon the worst." In a paper on Blackmur he makes a somewhat ambiguous distinction between "real, final evil," that is, "what is arbitrarily *so* in the universe, all that is undeserved and irremediable," and the Christian idea of an evil which comes from man and Satan, not God. The ambiguity is in his own position, which is apparently opposed to the Christian interpretation and blames—not God, in Whom he does not believe, but things, the universe as it is. There is a "grimness and awfulness and untouchable sadness in things," for him. Yet he can "forget the limitations and excesses and baseness that these days seem unforgettable," and say "that many things in this world are wonderful, but of all

(Continued on Page 195)

Paris Letter

BY FERNAND VIAL

PARIS continues to be exciting. Every day, from ten directions, new thoughts, new books, new philosophies vie for one's attention; from the Collège de France, that sedate old institution, from the Sorbonne, from a rejuvenated and lively Institut Catholique, from the remarkable team of *Les Etudes*, with Fathers Villain, Barjon, Rouquette, from *La Vie Intellectuelle* reflecting at every page the alertness of Father Maydiou, even from the theaters, not excluding La Comédie Française, now so open to new talents.

Considerations on practically every problem, literary, philosophical, religious, political, are delivered to you, I would say bodily, in the lecture halls. There is hardly a day in Paris without some lecture, somewhere, by a famous man. Others reach you more openly through the dozen weekly, semi-monthly, or monthly magazines; still others succeed in oozing through the columns of the daily newspapers, like *Le Figaro* or *Le Monde*. It is an exciting experience, requiring a dozen ears, a brain always keyed up, a thirty hour day and an indefatigable energy. One is supposed always to have read the latest book, to have seen the latest play, to have heard the latest lecture by Mauriac, or Gabriel Marcel, or Sartre.

And one had to follow intelligently the vagaries and complications of French politics when Mendès-France was expected to lose his slim and uncertain majority in the National Assembly. Added to this load, that every Parisian intellectual seems to carry lightly, a Fulbright scholar would be unworthy of his mission were he not lecturing, from Lille to Perpignan, on American politics, American life, the American student, and on Hemingway, of course, since he has received the Nobel Prize. Wined and dined by mayors, interviewed and photographed by provincial newspapers, he must display wisdom and knowledge, talk with authority but with becoming modesty, never forgetting in the process to kiss the hand of the prefect's wife and of the mayor's wife, a practice not fostered by years of teaching at Fordham University, and practically unknown at the French Institute for Sisters!

But either in Paris or on a lecture tour at Nice or Reims, it does well to be able to say, quite casually and more or less *à propos*: "Mauriac was telling me the other evening . . ." or "I had dinner last night with the Director of Cultural Affairs . . ." For conversation in France and especially in Paris is not a trifling affair. One cannot elude it here with a "Let's play bridge." We are completely deprived of the easier topics; no one ever talks about the weather, nor about the cunning of his *concierger*, although both subjects would

RENASCENCE

be inexhaustible. For some weeks last autumn, at the cocktails at and around the American Embassy, the conversation was concerned with apartments, with the impossibility of finding one, with the cost of living in Paris. Everyone could proffer words of wisdom. But that is all over now, and we had to make the perilous and difficult ascent into the poetic theories of Pierre Emmanuel, the Christian existentialism of Gabriel Marcel, the intricacies of Graham Greene's *Living Room*.

BUT in mid-winter, curiously, everything was quiet. The newspapers seemed to have run out of copy. *Le Figaro* had been constrained to resort to their old standby: they printed an article on the monster of Loch Ness, just as in the doldrums of summer. Two or three girls threw themselves into the Seine by "désespoir d'amour," but that was hardly worth a few lines. The transition was indeed too brusque, for the tragic events of the previous months had provided abundant materials for editors.

First there was "l'affaire Dominici," probably the most famous of the decade. This old farmer, from a lonely house on the shores of the Durance river, was accused of having killed Lord and Lady Drummond, and their daughter, who were camping near his property. Dominici was judged by the tribunal of Digne, in the Department of Basses-Alpes, and sentenced to death. His son testified against him while the rest of his family proclaimed his innocence. For weeks public opinion all over France, and particularly in Paris, followed the trial with passionate interest, and the partisans of Dominici's innocence waged a lively battle of words with those convinced of his guilt. Thousands of persons went to visit in far away Lurs, the scene of the crime. Then came the frightful storms on the Atlantic Ocean, which brought death to sixty-four fishermen, most of them from the little fishing town of Concarneau.

Fortunately, life brings also the usual share of happy occurrences. The attention of the literary world was recently concentrated on a little restaurant near the Gare de l'Est, the restaurant Drouant. For it is there that every year, at the same date, the Académie Goncourt meets to announce the winner of its coveted award. This year, however, a more important event took place at Drouant. Since last June, when Colette died, the Académie found itself reduced to nine members, and the election of the tenth member was the first order of business. The Académie Goncourt, second only in prestige to the Académie Française, continues to attract and encourage more original and less classical talent. Endless debates had been waged for weeks, and especially during the days preceding the election, on the most likely candidates. A vocal element favored the election of a woman to replace Colette, and the name of the most outstanding woman writer, Mlle Simone de Beauvoir, was

PARIS LETTER

repeatedly advanced. There was no unanimity among the advocates of the first sex, and their votes were divided among André Malraux, Sartre, Reverzy, and Jean Giono. At exactly one o'clock, M. Gérard Bauer, secretary of the Académie, announced that Jean Giono had been elected. The very next day, Giono's books appeared in the windows of all book shops in Paris adorned with the famous band: "Membre de l'Académie Goncourt." Giono is better known in the United States for the movies adapted from his novels by Marcel Pagnol: *Harvest* and *The Baker's Wife*. His novels themselves, however, written in a lyrical tone and almost without plot, are not easily translated into a foreign tongue. They describe, in an idyllic transposition but with many realistic touches, the lives and adventures of the peasants and shepherds of Manosque and the surrounding country. His style is vigorous, lively, full of colloquialisms and dialectical peculiarities proper to that region. Manosque, a little town of six thousand inhabitants in the Department of Basses-Alpes, near the Italian border, has left an indelible and easily recognizable imprint on Giono's works, for it is there that he was born (1895), reared, and has chosen to live. The general heading of his first three books, "Trilogy of Pan," which comprises *Colline*, *Un de Baumugnes* and *Regain* (1929-1930), signifies clearly enough their general inspiration and the themes they develop. They are naturalistic, bucolic, with an underlying pantheistic philosophy which considers man only as an integral part of the physical world. Yet, since about 1950, Giono's form has undergone a profound modification and his last two novels, *Le Hussard sur le toit* and *Le Moulin de Pologne*, are conceived along more traditional patterns. Simone de Beauvoir, the high priestess of existentialism, who has visited the United States and lectured in several universities, author of the celebrated and controversial *The Second Sex*, received the Goncourt award for her latest novel *Les Mandarins*. The same day, the Renaudot Award was bestowed upon Jean Reverzy, a medical doctor practicing in Lyon, for his novel, *Le Passage*.

BUT this news is only literary, and, in this letter written for readers of *Renaissance*, I would like to mention some important events of a Catholic character. The interest—so noticeable in France since the end of the last war—in Catholic interpretation and Catholic solutions in the fields of metaphysics, of ethics, and even of ascetics and mysticism, continues to manifest itself in a hundred ways, in the theater, novels, poetry, and particularly in increased participation in the liturgical life of the Church. Two recent expressions of this revived Catholic consciousness seem worthy of note.

The first was the "Semaine des Intellectuels Catholiques" which was held from November 7 to November 13 in a huge hall not far from the Sorbonne. The entire week was devoted to examination of the central problem: "What

RENASCENCE

is man?"—a theme proposed by François Mauriac at the outset of last year's meeting which dealt with social questions. It was a superb and impressive demonstration of Catholic vitality among the intellectuals of France, which would have been unthinkable a quarter of a century ago. According to strict procedure, I should say perhaps methodology, each aspect of the problem was examined and discussed in turn from metaphysical, theological, ethical, and, in appropriate cases, scientific, political and literary points of view. It would be impossible to summarize these debates and to mention all the prominent philosophers, theologians, scientists and men of letters who appeared on the rostrum. On the first evening, Gabriel Marcel talked on the topic: "Man is a problem for man." On Tuesday, Jean Guitton, the distinguished Catholic critic and philosopher, discussed the theme: "Man has had a beginning." The Wednesday meeting was presided over by a renowned scientist and member of the Academy of Sciences, Prof. Jean Lhermitte, who studied the clinical aspects of death under the heading, "Man is destined to die." A young and remarkable philosopher, Etienne Borne, collaborator for *La Vie intellectuelle*, explained the Christian philosophy of death as opposed to the pagan. (I had the privilege to spend a week, in August, as fellow-lecturer with Etienne Borne at the Summer Session of the Catholic University of Toulouse, where his eloquence and science won universal admiration.) Father Carré, a most persuasive Dominican, M. Joseph Folliet, a leader in the field of Catholic social work, M. Georges Gourdin and Stanislas Fumet, both well known for critical works on literature, appeared successive evenings. But the closing session, under the presidency of His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, was most grandiose and stirring. François Mauriac delivered an impassioned speech, at once a meditation and exhortation, on "Christ also was a man."

Without oratorical devices, but with that deep eloquence coming from the heart, with that wounded voice which makes his messages so moving, Mauriac commented on a subject dear to him, the degradation of the idea and of the image of man in contemporary society, a bequest from Nazism that even a Catholic society has not yet succeeded in eradicating. Then the youthful and dynamic mayor of Florence, M. George La Pira, rising amidst an ovation, commented on the precept of the Gospels: "All that you do to the least of these, you do unto me," the words which have inspired his extraordinary administration of a city which he freed from Communist domination. But the Catholics of France did not rest after that performance. They are a singularly active group, and several lectures are given each week throughout the year at their permanent headquarters, to which, by my intermediacy, American Catholics passing through Paris are invited: at 61, Rue Madame.

PARIS LETTER

THE second manifestation, perhaps not as essentially Catholic, involved Catholicism nonetheless both in theme and by reason of personalities invited to participate. In the last week of November a unique gathering of Pascal scholars met in the old Cistercian Abbey of Royaumont, some thirty miles from Paris, to celebrate the three-hundredth anniversary of the *Memorial*. Neglected since the nineteenth century, the Abbey was bought by an enlightened philanthropist, M. Henry Gouin, and transformed into a cultural center to receive French and foreign scholars for exchange of ideas. Under its energetic and far-sighted director, M. Marc-André Béra, the center is implementing that program with notable success, and it is to M. Béra that all credit is due for the organization of that celebration.

Specialists in French literature among the readers of *Renascence* will remember that on the night of November 23, 1654, Pascal underwent an experience of mystical nature which has been variously considered as a vision, a rapture, an ecstasis—or the ravings of a maniac. This he consigned to parchment bearing the famous words: "Joy, Joy, Joy, Tears, of Joy . . . God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, not of philosophers nor of the scholars . . . Total and sweet renunciation." He sewed that document to the lining of his coat, where it was discovered after his death. No ten lines, outside of the Scriptures, have elicited so much comment, inspired so much admiration, caused so much anger and scorn.

For five days, in this particularly fitting monastic atmosphere, not only in formal lectures and formal discussions, but also in endless conversation in the dining room, the cloister, the bedrooms, prominent Pascal scholars assembled from France and neighboring countries, reviewed again the famous document, and, by a necessary relation, Pascal's thought in the light of new research and of a new age. All shades of opinions and of convictions were represented, from a Catholic position with abbé Coignet, professor at the Catholic University of Paris, Jean Mesnard, Orcibal, all authors of authoritative studies on Pascal or Port-Royal, to the Marxist interpretation offered by M. Goldman and M. Lefèvre. Yet no discussion anywhere was more courteous, more respectful of another's opinion, even when, as was often the case, that opinion was vigorously combatted. But the *Memorial* was not forgotten elsewhere. Scores of articles were devoted to it in all types of magazines and newspapers, notably by Mauriac in *Le Figaro*, and after three hundred years the Jesuits seemed ready to forgive Pascal since Father Daniélou spoke kindly of him at a celebration at St. Etienne du Mont on the very night of November 23. Since then a remarkable exhibit has been held in the Capitular room of the Monastery of Port-Royal, the Monastery which Pascal visited often after his sister Jacqueline entered it. There one can view a photograph

RENASCENCE

of the *Memorial*, Pascal's crucifix, his death mask, many other relics of his life and the first edition of *Les Provinciales*.

SINCE the liberation of France the drama seems to have been a particularly favored mode of expression for Catholic thought. At the beginning of last November, *Le Dialogue des Carmélites*, by Bernanos, ended its more than two-year run at the Théâtre Hébertot. Anouilh's *L'Alouette*, a drama of St. Joan of Arc, has been playing for months at the Théâtre Montparnasse. *Sur la terre comme au ciel*, which found no favor in New York, where it closed after a week last winter, was unusually successful here. At this writing two plays, of Catholic inspiration, are loudly acclaimed and promised a long run.

The French, of course, have no claim to *The Living Room* of Graham Greene which opened in October in Paris. But this tormented play, which brings to the stage two old maids (one of them a psychopath), a paralyzed and powerless priest, a professor of psychology, and a young girl who has fallen in love with him, raises several of the problems with which French Catholics are wrestling. And they, as well as the general public, have given *Living Room* a friendly welcome. Yet, at a recent meeting of the "Intellectuels Catholiques" where the play was discussed by Luc Estang, Jacques Madaule, Mauduit and others, its conception was vigorously attacked by the chaplain of the group, and with arguments that I think pertinent, for they reach deeply into an evident weakness of present Catholic literature. "It is regrettable," said abbé Berrar, "that divine grace should be considered more and more as flowing exclusively into mediocre and even degenerated creatures, drunkards, carnal sinners, so that ordinarily decent persons, conscious of their obligations to God, the Church, and society appear to be excluded from the kingdom of heaven." Luc Estang pointed out rightly, in defense of his corporation, that this was a reaction against Catholic literature in the previous generations which depicted the Catholic as assuring his salvation while always eminently successful in this world.

As you know by now, Montherlant was placed upon the stage of the Comédie-Française with his well advertised *Port-Royal*. Everyone familiar with him knows that the theme of Port-Royal and all that it represents, a particularly austere conception of the dogma and precepts of Christianity, has haunted his mind for many years. Another of his best plays, *Le Maître de Santiago*, paints the exaltation of that concept in the old Spanish knight, who resolutely kills in himself the most natural and legitimate feelings, such as the love for his daughter. Montherlant has revealed that he had composed another *Port-Royal*, (some fifteen years ago), which he destroyed. He has besides publicized that this is his last play, that he is now going into a period of retire-

PARIS LETTER

ment. That and his irrefutable reputation as a great playwright—*La Reine Morte* was played until October at the Comédie-Française—was enough to draw crowds and agitate the fraternity of critics. With the already named *Maître de Santiago*, and *La Ville dont le Prince est un Enfant*, *Port-Royal* completes the Catholic trilogy in the works of Montherlant, counterbalancing the works of pagan inspiration such as *Les lépreuses*, *Malatesta*, or even *La Reine Morte*, a remarkable play indeed, but one in which only human passions are involved.

PORT ROYAL, however, is vastly different from Montherlant's previous plays, even, in fact, from any contemporary play; it constitutes a sort of challenge. It is a one-act play with the dimensions of a five-act one. It is presented, for three and a half hours, without a single interruption or intermission, and the action, meaning here external events, is practically nonexistent. Montherlant has explained at length his purpose in a *Préface* to the published edition of *Port-Royal*, and in numerous notes and declarations. He has aimed to write a play without conflicts, "coups de théâtre," dramatic episodes and sudden unexpected developments, such as the public has been led to consider normal and essential aspects of the drama, a play where the action would be practically all internal. In so doing, Montherlant has presented a drama which is almost strictly historical, based on solid research and a long familiarity with Port-Royal, and the men and women who, pure in their hearts and in their lives, but haughty in the consciousness of their purity, created in the Church of France a dissidence which has not yet healed. Perhaps they flatter in each of us an inborn instinct of revolt, but it is difficult to withhold one's admiration from these frail women who dared to defy the authority of the King, and the authority of Rome and of their own Archbishop, when the King was Louis XIV and the Archbishop, the weak and distraught Hardouin de Péréfixe, and when virtue was so evidently on the side of the oppressed.

These are the feelings that Montherlant has splendidly expressed in his presentation of the events which occurred on August 21, 1664—the entire play is taken up by that single day—in the parlor of Port-Royal when Hardouin de Péréfixe ordered the nuns to sign the famous *formulaire*. (To simplify a very complicated and drawn-out situation, it will suffice to say that this *formulaire* was a declaration recognizing that the five propositions condemned by the Faculty of Theology of Paris and by Rome were heretical and were in fact contained in the *Augustinus* of Jansenius. This is also to a great extent the subject of the *Provinciales* of Pascal.) They all refuse. The leaders, twelve nuns in all, are then expelled from their convent, sent to the convent of the Annonciation where their directors will be Jesuits, and deprived of the sacraments. It is a scene of great dignity, and yet intensely

RENAISSANCE

pathetic, more by the things unsaid but deeply felt than by the spoken words of respectful but firm defiance.

But the real drama, in Montherlant's view, is elsewhere: in the heart of Sister Angélique de Saint-Jean—played with extraordinary competence and sensitiveness by Annie Ducaux—the niece of the "Grand Arnauld," assistant prioress of the Convent. For Sister Angélique, who appears to us at the beginning of the play, as a tower of strength, so sure of her position, so convinced of being right even against the whole world, upbraids the weaker, more human Sister Françoise who wavers in her decision not to sign the *formulaire*. And Sister Angélique will soon go through a period of doubt touching not only the present crisis, but the very foundation of faith. Sister Françoise will follow an opposite path and unflinchingly oppose the order of the Archbishop with tenacity. Such is, in its broad lines, *Port-Royal*, an experiment in form now assured of success, and in its outward simplicity one of the most stirring productions in recent years, whose intrinsic quality is still enhanced by a superbly chosen cast.

Port-Royal's success was not foreign to the subtle bids from several members of the French Academy who would be proud to receive Montherlant in its midst. The ambiguous, some say insolent, letter sent to that honorable but aging body by Montherlant, has been construed as a refusal. The author was too busy chasing rats brought to his basement by the flood of the Seine to make the protocolar visits required from a candidate. The Academy is wounded, and deeply disturbed. Three seats were waiting to be filled in February. André Malraux, also solicited, has also refused: too busy writing a novel. Jean Cocteau, Daniel-Rops, many others less known, would dearly love to wear the "bicorné," the sword, and the green habit. The campaign is already in full swing and rather exciting.

BUT there was also a Bossuet exhibit at the National Archives, manuscripts, letters, corrections of Bossuet on the childish homework of the Dauphin. And I had to see the Rimbaud exhibit at the Bibliothèque Nationale, and the exhibit of eighteenth century dresses at the Musée Carnavalet. The Barrault troupe was giving the *Volpone* of Jules Romains at the Théâtre. And I had to see the Rimbaud exhibit at the Bibliothèque Nationale, and Marigny. And the mail brought an invitation to attend three days of lectures and debates on "Connaissance de la France dans le Monde" at the Sorbonne. Robert Schuman was giving a lecture that night. Nor can one fail to attend the session of the National Assembly at which Mendès-France defended his program. And I had to prepare a lecture by John Brown, now Cultural Attaché in Paris, to the "Intellectuels Catholiques"; his book *Panorama de la Littérature Américaine* had just received the Award of the Critics. A

PARIS LETTER

Parisian theater is going to stage *L'Annonce faite à Marie* by Paul Claudel. Jean Amrouche told me recently that he is going to resume his weekly interviews with Claudel on the national Radio Chain and publish a sequel to his monumental *Mémoires improvisés* which throws a new light on Claudel's life and work. Mauriac has tried his hand at the seventh art and written a scenario for a movie on the Mass: *Le Pain Vivant*. Very stilted, cold, and unmoving with typical Mauriacian characters. A probable complete failure.

Shape of the Lightning: Randall Jarrell

(Continued from Page 186)

these the most wonderful is man." This may be pure, unjustified romance; but as he says of De la Mare: "whose Law is it that a hopeless romantic cannot write good poetry?"

Jarrell does write good poetry, even in prose. This kind of statement should always be made with the kind of humility which remembers that the "swans to which one spends one's Sunday afternoons feeding bread crumbs" may "turn out to be Southey's." But there is no fear of that. Jarrell is, even if he were nothing else, much too consistently entertaining to be a Southey.

Review-Articles

Literature and Christianity

Littérature du XXe siècle et christianisme. Volume I: Silence de Dieu. By Charles Møller. Tournai: Casterman.

Littérature du XXe siècle et christianisme. Volume II: La foi en Jésus-Christ. By Charles Møller. Tournai: Casterman.

ABBÉ Møller prefaces his effort to achieve synthesis in the field of contemporary literary criticism by suggesting that letters in the twentieth century have come to constitute a revelation of their own: this age of two wars and still untallied suffering affords palpable evidence that "the ways of the Lord are not our ways." This premise will not be challenged in most quarters. However, the abbé develops his appraisals out of the concomitant conviction that "It is not man that saves man, but God Himself, in Jesus Christ." So at least some critics of contrary inclination might protest that he indulges in too great a presumption by "bringing" the Trinity into the field of literary criticism, that he should have called his work *Littérature du XXe siècle et l'Église* or *Littérature du XXe siècle et la doctrine catholique*. But, in weighing such niceties, it might be well to bear in mind Møller's dedication "A ceux qui sont pauvres."

Also, if there be anticipating objections, let assurance be furnished here that Møller's sole hope was not to gain an *imprimatur*, in the pejorative sense: he does not hedge the complex suggestions of contemporary authorships with the ultimate niceties of disputation. No more than a rudimentary knowledge of Christine doctrine is necessary to understand his expositions and insights. But a full knowledge would help, of course, as the texts of the writers considered are continuously and carefully the object of his thought.

The first of Møller's projected volumes, to be five in number, is entitled *Silence de Dieu*. Seven writers are studied in these more than four hundred rather closely printed pages. The first section of the book, *Les enfants de cette terre*, is devoted to Albert Camus and André Gide; the second division, *Les aéronautes sans cargaison*, to Aldous Huxley and Simone Weil; the third part, *Les enfants de la terre et du ciel*, to Grahame Greene and Julien Green. The final pages offer a chapter on Bernanos and a concluding summation. And why does Møller select the title, *Le silence de Dieu*, for his studies of these seven authors? When each of these writers is studied individually and according to his perspectives, he "brings his testimony to the central problem of God's silence." And what is the meaning of implying God's silence? It is another vocable for alleging "the absurdity of the universe," for asserting that man is "a useless passion."

The first study, then, is concerned with Albert Camus. The themes of hope and suicide, determination and despair, resignation and revolt are examined in the light of this author's efforts in the drama, essay, and novel. Aware that the author of *Le mythe de Sisyphe* (1944) was too quickly identified with existentialism by reason of his apparent concern with absurdity (cf. the Sartre-Camus exchange in *Temps modernes*, May and August, 1952), Møller deems Camus' position to be more a result of a personal experience than a reasoned adherence

RENAISSANCE

to existentialist protestations. Not a formal philosopher but alert to what has happened to himself and others, Camus is seen simply as a writer unable to reconcile the post-1938 brand of evil to the point of including it in the divine concordance. Still, the author of *Les Justes* (1949) is not made to turn his back on all but the physical aspects of humanity. If Camus puts health before salvation, as he says, he has also written, at the end of *La Peste* (1947), that there "are in men more things to admire than things to scorn." Thereby Møller sees Camus as the paradox of a Christian without a creed, as a man refusing God while he seeks, in the same breath, to deliver men from the evil of their making. Møller is not too convinced that Camus will undertake what Luc Estang has termed the enlistment beyond practical good and predatory evil, but he insists that any view of Camus should embrace his plea for justice and charity.

André Gide would inevitably attract Møller's attention, and his second essay draws largely from what has been remarked by the former's contemporaries and critics as well as from what Gide himself has said or written. Since Gide and his authorship have been scrutinized so extensively in recent years, it is refreshing to find an essay devoted to him *in toto* and still aware not only of the Gidean production but also of the multiple interpretations thereof. And herein is at least one virtue of this notice on Gide: it is brief. Compact in its exposition, it strives generously for synthesis in the matter of a literary and personal presence which, damned or praised, has continued to provoke. Orienting his essay to what Professor Noth has called "the struggle for Gide's soul" (cf. *Yale French Studies*, VII, pp. 12-20), Møller organizes his study according to a chronological plan. Proceeding title by title and drawing freely from the Gidean journals, he traces the themes which wax or wane in the course of Gide's works, and he describes the groupings into which these works may be said to fall. Møller's conclusions are couched in terms of Gide and death, and God and Gide. The validity of these final topics could hardly be disputed in the case of Gide, if only on a critical level.

Møller accepts Jouguelet's divisions of Aldous Huxley's works into two categories: the humanistic writings, the summit of which is *Counterpoint* (1928), and those in the mystic vein, such as *Eternal philosophy* (1946). Huxley's gravitation towards the thought of the Orient is explained as the result of a disgust with Marxism, a resentment against the Catholic church principally on account of dealing with Franco, a revolt against Victorianism, a dissatisfaction with official Anglicanism. What else were left except to go East? But Huxley is thought by Møller to have studied Oriental philosophies not for their own sake but rather as a man of science might examine the immediate variables in order to rest assured with an unvarying immediate. Whence ensues the quest for an "eternal philosophy." Møller's principal topics in reference to Huxley are the rejection of revealed religions, technical and perennial philosophy, the identity of the individual and the absolute.

As for the portrait of Simone Weil, an eyebrow may be raised here and there upon finding her included at this point in Møller's study; however, the latter holds that while the former "preaches the necessity of uniting one's self with the suffering of the world," her fundamental belief remained stoic rather than Christian and the spiritual climate which sustained her charity was gnostic. An obvious martyr in the name of this virtue herself and only too quick to know the misfortune and unhappiness of others, she still could not embrace the entirety

REVIEW-ARTICLES

of Christian acceptance. The enthusiasm of certain Catholics for her writings proves nothing more than that she had certain attitudes and sentiments which are obviously Christian. But she remained essentially with her own convictions, not having been able to recognize that "le fond de l'être ne nous appartient pas; il est à Dieu." In *Attente de Dieu* and *Lettre à un religieux*, Möller contends, there is "perfect evidence" that "Simone Weil did not see that if faith is reasonable, *this does not mean that it is a mathematical certainty*; now, she will refuse baptism, because she was waiting for a *certainty* to constrain her to it" (pp. 232-3; his italics). Simone Weil might have resided in what Pascal called the supreme order of charity, but she never moved beyond it without renouncing it. Möller points to the suggestion, inherent in Bruce Marshall's *Father Malachy's Miracle*, that the answer is not always a miracle so colossal that none may choose to ignore it.

Graham Greene's work is offered as a fifth variation on the theme of God's silence, of His apparent divorce from earth. Not only is his constant creation of dread and engulfing atmospheres a poetic persuasion to this end, but he suggests directly that Satan appears everywhere in triumph, whether the locale be Mexico, Brighton, or a train. The major disheartenment in the face of Greene's conveyance as a novelist is his strongly separate suggestion that "hell is about us from childhood," that the cruelties and stupidity of school are the optimum preparation for the injustice and hypocrisy to be lived in later, whatever the quest. There is the constant and obvious persuasion that, in and by himself, each will try the turn of his hand in the same shadows. Acknowledging the primacy of Greene's purpose as a novelist, Möller offers a summary catalogue of the characterizations to be found in the books that Greene has written: those who revolt, those who blind themselves wittingly in order to continue, those who insist upon using loaded dice whether the stakes be low or not, and those who fail. There is a lengthy analysis of Scobie and the meaning of his acts. Again, some will suggest that Möller's remarks on Greene, too enmeshed with the doctrine of the Church, are knotted so finally in spiritual terms that his genre is not literary criticism. But would not such an objection be especially irrelevant in the case of Greene? Putting aside the fact that Greene has been a Catholic since 1927, it would nevertheless seem necessary to have a knowledge of the personal belief of a writer distinguishing so clearly between sin and sinner.

Disputing the notion that Julien Green is merely another purveyor of Poesque magic, Möller points immediately to the fact that the author of *Moirá*, converted to Catholicism in 1939, is concerned uncommonly with the invisible world. Drawing his documentation almost exclusively from Green's *Journal* (1928-50), for he finds the understanding of Green more constantly lodged on a personal level than even in the case of Greene, Möller distinguishes two major periods in Green's life. The first of these extends from 1900 to 1939, when Green was moving to a discovery of God through a desire for a realm beyond the senses; the second period is that of "the Christian drama" from 1939 to 1952. Separate sections are devoted to his childhood, adolescence, the first religious crisis induced by reading Cardinal Gibbons' *The Faith of our Fathers*, and "the great refusal" in April, 1919; the final stages of the first period in Green's life are described as the loss of his "incipient" faith and his subsequent fascination with the walls and eaves of India. Then, as is known, Green's conversion transpired subsequent to a reading of the *Traité du Purgatoire* by Saint Catherine of Sienna and a

RENASCENCE

conversation with Maritain. Möller's presentation of Green's development after 1939 is concerned with aspects of three topics especially pertinent in this instance of conversion: "the growth of temptation, both in number and intensity; the apparent irresponsibility of the sinner; finally, the abandonment in which, at first glance, God leaves him" (p. 347). Möller sees in Green's own drama and efforts a significance different from that of Greene: while the latter points the way to hope, the latter underlines the virtue of faith by a subscription of his own.

Since Möller sees in Graham Greene a sign to hope and, by similar equating, he writes that Julien Green is a pledge in faith, it is perhaps unfair to entertain the thought that he has devoted the concluding essay of this first volume to Bernanos for reasons of "rounding out." But this would, of course, be the inevitable thought, because Bernanos is now generally credited with the status of precursorship in the history of modern "theological" literature. Still, in view of the careful and earnest studies of Bernanos that have already been contributed, especially Luc Estang's volume in the *Présence* series, Möller's essay seems brief. Certainly, it is now known well and widely that the Bernanosian protagonists are tempted fully and deftly to despair, that Bernanos' saints are filled with anguish and the awareness that sin exists. However, these few last pages are refreshing reminder that Bernanos furnishes a thought towards a perfect act of charity, such as Scobie attempted, in folly and with meaning. Also, Möller's paragraphs on the children in Bernanos suggest that further effort to study Bernanos' sentiments in this direction might be fruitful.

It would be easy to flatter Möller for having attempted to take, simultaneously, the measure of Camus, Gide, Huxley, Weil, Greene, Green, Bernanos, all in one volume. But a subtler homage is due by reason of his awareness that the human condition remains open to boundless victory. If Möller's thesis for this first group of critical essays must be described in a few words, it were best to say that his book fosters the conviction that God's silence tenders eloquent terms.

IN HIS second volume, Möller writes of Jean-Paul Sartre, Henry James, Roger Martin du Gard, and Joseph Malègue. He introduces his appraisals of these writers by pointing to the manner of indifferentism as suggested by the heroes and heroines of Henry James. Möller then faces those who, concerned with an explanation, cling to occult aids and continue in the manner of viewing Christianity as a post-Hellenic mythology, consoling perhaps, but still mythology. Sartre and, less bitterly, Martin du Gard are among them. Then, there are those who seek God in the hope of ultimate understanding. Möller sees Malègue writing in the genre of these last.

In his essay on Sartre, the abbé Möller, not succumbing to the temptation of undertaking another doctrinal account of existentialism as a separate system, addresses himself preferably to the Sartrian attitude and performance. He has recourse to the discipline of philosophy only when finding a spiritual conviction rather than a literary accomplishment to be the immediate and proper point of appraisal. Moving to what he considers the heart of the matter by defining the atheistic aspects of Sartre's writings, the abbé presents first his view of Sartre as a man. Then, well aware that the author of *La nausée* is possessed of an impeccably progressive sense of logic and a Proustian fine pen to match, he proceeds to his analysis of Sartre's apparent acceptance of the Husserlian thought that God is a contradictory notion (the "en-soi" and the "pour-soi"), and his conveyance of the "paradox" of liberty and God. The abbé's concluding topic is

REVIEW-ARTICLES

Sartre's antitheism: "the problem of God is secondary, useless, since it changes nothing in the unfolding of human life" (cf. *Le Diable et le bon Dieu*). As an artist, at least, Sartre is seen as settling in a viscous world of viscid experience while the creatures about him indulge not in a transcendence but in, to use Jean Wahl's term, a "transcendence." Møller concludes that Sartre, clinging to a pinnacing pride, remains continuously a rationalist and a materialist all the while pretending to surpass these familiar and worn levels by employing quick gifts of description and a hawkish sense of scene. His most serious objection to Sartre is that the latter does not have an eye for the slightest innocence.

In his second essay, Møller recalls that, after reading his first volume of Henry James in 1937 and being made aware thereby of the Jamesian brand of cosmopolitanism, he could find only André Gide and Charles Du Bos able to speak of this American author, who died before the 1917 entrance of the United States into World War I. Møller regrets, too, that the majority of James' critics, such as Desmond MacCarthy and André Maurois, did not choose to read more widely in James. His suggestion is that those in search of calmly competent thoughtfulness would do well to seek a fuller view of what James has written. Although James, Møller maintains, is viewed generally in retrospect as having accomplished principally a view of the set that moved, well before Hollywood, between London and Italy via Paris, the author of *The Ambassadors* may be seen as endowed with a more than singular craft: he sounds clearly the elegant rounds of evil. Still, Møller's plea that James executes a greater significance, that he may be re-read through a new looking-glass, and in a newer hue, seems overly colored. This were a somewhat too simple device for any reader electing himself the first to play this game with any author of more than simple stature. But, even if it be difficult to accept the author of *The Wings of the Dove* as a contemporary, without benefit of post-1918 events, Møller's essay will stand as a provocation to examine more fully the implications of the egoism and falsehood that James sets upon so bright a table.

Centering his study of Roger Martin du Gard about *Jean Barois*, Møller gives a penetrating account of the less edifying aspects of the history of religious attitudes in France subsequent to the accession of Napoleon III. It was of these years that Claudel wrote to Gabriel Frizeau in 1904, "On one side there are the scholars, the artists, the intelligent people, the statesmen, the business men, the men of the world, who all assure me with a perfect sureness that God does not exist; on the other side, there are the humbugs, the pious old women, the Stations-of-the-Cross art, the stifling incompetence of the sermons." This was the moment that inspired Heiler to speak of *Vulgärkatholizismus*, when certain Catholics had feelings of being in the ghetto. It is against this background that Møller sees Martin du Gard drawing his picture of the childhood of Jean Barois. Thus, there is special pertinence in the inability of Martin du Gard's protagonist to withstand atheistic intellectualism in university life and in his gaining victory in positivism. For the weakness of Catholic education in France around 1880, confined as it was to preachments about an enormous and wonderfully private purity, could not possibly produce men and women competent and courageous enough to meet the attitudinous tides rushing forward, at top crest, as if all shores might be their own. So Martin du Gard's "Catholic" characters might scarcely avoid the empty sweeps of rational simplification, of

RENAISSANCE

fideistic parochialism, or of budgetary pragmatism parading beneath sadly false silk. Barois' conversion at the last moment provokes Möller to incisive comment: he sees this act as born solely and desperately out of the fear of ultimately finding black nothing, as a parody of Christian death. It is clear that the greater value of Martin du Gard's work, for Möller, is not the demonstration of any spiritual totality but rather his documentation for an age convinced that science is all.

Now, Möller's essay on Sartre is seventy pages long. Henry James is allotted fifty-two pages, and Martin du Gard, forty-nine. Joseph Malègue occupies eighty-three pages. An obvious question is why this last author, the least known of the four, is accorded such extended treatment. Möller anticipates this query, perhaps, by prefacing his appraisal of this writer's work with the comment, "whether he tried to or not, Malègue answered [in *Augustin ou le Maître est là*] Martin du Gard's Jean Barois: same subject, same period, but treated with an infinitely richer depth than the romanced chronicle of Martin du Gard." He explains that he felt obliged thereby to enter into greater detail in examining this work of nearly nine hundred pages not only because the work itself deals with an extremely complex spiritual adventure but also because it has been criticized unjustly on grounds of being fideistic. Thus, while Möller follows the thread of narrative, he pauses when feeling the need of more lengthy comment, i.e. in the development of the thesis that the younger Augustin's disbelief is not born simply of his will to try the fruit of knowledge, "but of having *ill used* his intelligence," of having attempted to apply purely logical premises and strictly technical processes of analysis to matters of faith. So Augustin falls into the recurrent nineteenth century error of ignoring that the presence of real values is not always wholly measurable by a bureau of standards. Malègue, then, is seen as having drawn, in the first half of *Augustin*, a precise and perhaps unique picture in fiction of the rationalistic or merely humanistic attitude tending, when given loose rein, to replace the theocentric perspective with an anthropocentric argument. And, curiously enough, this is done, Möller points out, without acknowledging such a well known factor of the laboratory as the personal coefficient! So, unlike Martin du Gard, Malègue sees neither the anti-clericalism of university thinking nor the temptations of the flesh as the real deviating force in his young student, for Augustin is depicted more subtly as trying to make the rationalistic process the binding agent of his religious thought. It is not until Augustin suffers later as a man and comes to learn the humanity of Christ that, turning his thinking around, he acknowledges the necessity of a free consent instead of an impeccable demonstration. Then, unlike Jean Barois, Augustin offers himself in death: he offers not only what is left of his being but also his very weakness, his suffering, and his spirit. It is for this reason obviously that the abbé Möller has chosen to devote his final and lengthiest essay to Malègue.

SPIRE PITOU

Book Reviews

Surf and the Flesh

Agamemnon. By William Alfred. New York: Knopf. \$3.00.

MR. ALFRED'S aim in writing *Agamemnon*, according to his preface, was to write "a tragedy, a play about the moral limits of life, and what the cost of violating them is." He chose the Agamemnon play, he says, because "Clytemnestra's story is doubly old: in time, and in the consciousness of us all. For it is a myth, a fable which is an ambush of reality." How well Mr. Alfred has laid this ambush for modern readers by retelling the twenty-five-centuries-old story poetically in modern idiom was amply attested three years ago by Robert Lowell's remark on seeing the manuscript: "This is the finest thing to have come out of America in years." It certainly is.

Alfred's verse tragedy is not a translation of the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus—at least not in any ordinary sense. It is, instead, a wholly new version of that "old story of how Clytemnestra, the sister of Helen of Troy, came to kill her husband, Agamemnon, on the very day of his victorious return to Greece." And he tells his story in terms that speak with a special urgency to moderns. The essential ingredients of the Aeschylean original are all present: the quadrumvirate of lovers, Clytemnestra, Aegisthus, Agamemnon, Cassandra; the love-hate-pride motivations that drive them through agonized conflict to their inevitable tragedies; and students of the ancient play will frequently recognize verbal echoes of Aeschylus' drama in the poetry of this modern version. But this is as far as similarities go, for in every other respect Mr. Alfred's *Agamemnon* is a new play.

He has kept the ancient setting, but has softened and romanticized its stark, primitive edges; into this warmer arena he has introduced characters who are complex and modern, and who speak a language befitting them. The colloquial thrust of the language may, indeed, startle readers used to the formal sonorities of scholarly translations. Aegisthus, for example, describing how he was sent off to murder his father, says:

King Atreus sent me on a sudden errand
To execute a man he had locked up
The way you'd send a boy to buy a basket,
Or pick a letter up for you.

And Clytemnestra, endeavoring to tear herself away once and for all from Aegisthus on the morning of Agamemnon's return, pleads:

I've known too many who mistake for love
The need to have the fatal final word.
And what can you want of me if it's not that?—
Look at me. Look. I'm fifty-three years old—
It's almost funny. What can I give you
But a life in sordid hill-towns, hiding out,
Childless and wasted. . . .

But it is in the character and motivations of his Clytemnestra that Alfred has effected the greatest changes from his classical model. The love-in-hate motive

RENASCENCE

of Aeschylus' tragic heroine is still present, but it has been deepened and enriched in the person of the middle-aged woman of this modern play, this aging beauty who for ten long years has ruled over Argos in her husband's absence. For in the interval Aegisthus has come, first to assuage her grief for the daughter she has been led to believe died of fever at Aulis, and then to fill up her loneliness and make mild her rueful despair over a beauty and youth that is passing away. She is torn between the love and loyalty she owes to the absent warrior-king, and the insistence of her heart and flesh on her younger lover. "Oh, I sit long hours," she tells her counsellor, Aegon,

till the moon has drowned,

And the rooms grow dark, and others've breathed the night.

But the will repents; and the puzzled flesh cries out

For its fulfillment in the old violence . . .

If I but nod, the vandal dreams break in—

Agamemnon . . .

I see his face half-buried in the sand,

The water beating on his heavy hair,

His breastplate clouding with the bitter surf,

And it seems to me that surf is in my heart,

Not for my husband dead upon the beach,

But for the treason of my wanting it.

Her thirty-six-year-old lover, Aegisthus, is a man driven through some terrible, black orbit by the unspeakable knowledge of his criminal origins, that he is the son of his mother and her father. Even as he has inherited the curse put upon the house of Atreus, so he has also inherited its dark sensuality. His "summer face" and "sunburst manner" that

Will melt the honeycombs of memory

In every rocky agora he graces,

all too well abet his sensualist's code that

Even the flesh

Has duties; and those, stronger than the mind's.

In this modern version Aegisthus is far more sympathetically treated, and resembles not at all the craven adulterer of the *Oresteia*.

Again, Alfred's Agamemnon is a man motivated by pride, but not by the hybrystic and arrogant pride of Aeschylus' hero, the sacker of cities who treads upon the sacred tapestries. Rather, this modern Agamemnon is a man too proud to commit himself totally to love, a man who demands of his Cassandra that she commit sacrilege in coming to his embraces, but who will not open his own heart to her. He is a man who has thought to construct a world of order out of reason alone, and, if need be, to sacrifice all human feeling to that cold vision. Haunted by the memory he has suppressed of the daughter he killed at Aulis "for a change of wind," guilt-ridden that he has allowed his queen to believe that Iphigenia died of fever, he finds the kingdom of his intellectual poise divided:

I thought to step from that still shore she died on

To a fixed shore of certainty—but no!

The continents have split; and here I stand,

Arrested like a paralysed colossus

Above these straits I've too much weight to leap.

BOOK REVIEWS

Remote, cut off from the world of men, he sails forever through strange seas of thought, alone.

The Cassandra of the play is the priestess dedicated to Apollo who has forsaken her god to embrace this rational, almost inhuman lover. Agamemnon's refusal to open his heart to her, his desperate attempts to preserve the secret of Iphigenia's death, sets up an impassable barrier between them—and when he finally ceases to withhold himself and his secret, it is too late. Cassandra has had her vision of the impending disaster, and Clytemnestra has discovered the truth.

It is Alfred's handling of the Iphigenia theme that gives his tragedy such urgency and power. For although the dead girl never appears in the play, she dominates every moment of it. It is Clytemnestra's grief over her daughter's death that brings Aegisthus to her, and it is Agamemnon's guilt over the ritual sacrifice of his daughter at Aulis that makes him seek a substitute for her in Cassandra. It is Clytemnestra's discovery of the truth that fixes her resolve to slay her husband; it is her husband's refusal to face the truth that frustrates all hope of his finding solace in the arms of Cassandra. The sacrifice of the innocent girl at Aulis finds its logical conclusion in the sacrifice of Agamemnon and Cassandra in the courtyard of the palace of Argos.

This *Agamemnon* is a powerfully moving play, not only for its economical and tightly-woven handling of the ancient myth, but also for its disturbing, often magnificent, poetry. "Don't talk to me of the permanence of the mind," Cassandra cries to Agamemnon as they journey home to Greece,

The image of Troy's order lies decaying
In over twenty thousand dead men's eyes—
Is that what you mean by the permanence of the mind?
Or is it the brain itself you think will outlive you?
The brain will harden like a buried egg,
Cleave to the prostrate base of the crazing skull,
And burst at the soft invasion of the worm,
In a last futile ambushade on death
From some sarcastic ditch.

And there is Cassandra telling of a day in her childhood when her father took her up into the Phrygian hills to show her some primitive memorial stone:

Two faceless figures in a spasm of embrace,
And under them as if in a child's hand,
A sentence or two addressed to the cleansing air.
As if one's grief could be eroded too!
This stone stays with me; for my father said:
"Child, this is beautiful; remember it."
But it was more than beautiful. It was true.
It read—and I can see it now before me . . .
"Traveler,
It is a fearful thing to love what death can touch."

But Alfred's special gift, at least for this reviewer, is his superb ability imaginatively to recreate the events and people he describes, to invest them with moving detail, and to make us see them in believable, human terms. I have never, for example, found anywhere else the undeniable picture he gives of what life must have been for Clytemnestra in her home with her beautiful sister,

RENASCENCE

Helen, and the constant cluster of suitors, in the years before history and myth caught up these young girls. It was Agamemnon who redeemed her from anonymity:

He brought me up from Lacedaemon young,
The oil was on my eyelids.—God, I loved him!
And can it all be gone?
You don't know what it meant to me. You can't!
Helen, Helen, Helen, Helen, Helen,
For twenty-three annihilating years—
I just didn't exist until he passed her
And took me by the hand.

And who has ever imagined before what life must have been to Leda in the years after that apocalyptic moment when the clouds opened, and Zeus, metamorphosed into a swan, embraced her at the water's edge to produce the immortal offspring, love and war? "I suppose," says Clytemnestra,

That if I live
I'll lurch at certain changes in the weather
With the adhesions of this hidden scar,
As my mother did before me in her time.
"Your mother?" asks her counsellor, questioning.

Leda! Leda!

Sometimes when at the crux of August the light
Fixed above the breathless trees, and the swan
Broke through that net of shadows in the water
With his fearful ease, she'd start. . . .

Mr. Alfred's *Agamemnon* was first printed in Rome in 1953 in *Botteghe Oscure* XI. This present edition is a revised version, handsomely published in a limited edition of 1250 copies, and the type distributed. The author is at present an instructor at Harvard University, and is a frequent contributor to *The Hudson Review*, *Commonweal*, and other magazines. This is his first verse drama. It is an astonishing performance, and exhibits poetical gifts of a very high order.

Northwestern University

PETER J. SENG

Spirit of the Symbol

Gertrud von le Fort: E O Retôrno à Ordem Cristã. By Mansueto Kohnen.
Rio de Janeiro: Pongetti.

T. BONAVENTURE tells us in his *Journey of the Mind to God* that there are certain considerations which "must be meditated upon again and again and with deep attention," if we are to explore the richness of their latent meaning. Gertrud von le Fort offers us that sort of matter for thought. Her poetry is not especially "difficult." Her powerful biblical cadences stimulate the reader's attention. In her prose she at times relies heavily on saga-like narratives; on other occasions, where the action is entirely internal, her continuity is maintained by long description interspersed with flashes of conversation. Far from being marred by such techniques, these prose works read with remarkable fluidity and clarity and their literal theme, at least, is never beyond

BOOK REVIEWS

reach. Yet despite her immediate impact, a reader of von le Fort needs a good interpreter. Her thought abounds with symbolical extensions that lose themselves in the infinity of spiritual being. She cuts deeply into the crust of contemporary mediocrity and probes the dimensions of spiritual conflicts underlying history. Such truth projects the mind toward further truth and continually suggests fresh applications. Before this kaleidoscopic wealth of meaning can be explored, however, the focal point must be seen. Father Kohnen's work is a valuable guide to the author's thoughts. His book goes farther and explores with more clarity, completeness, and understanding than does Jappe's *Gertrud von le Fort: Das Erzaelende Werk*.

Father Kohnen's treatment of *Veronika's Veil* is typical of the method followed throughout. In three pages he outlines the literal theme, sketches the main characters, and suggests the various symbolical applications of the Roman background. Finally, and most important, he indicates the core of meaning—the conflict between anthropocentricity and theocentricity—and indicates the manner in which all other elements converge upon this consideration.

All the romances, novels, and chronicles are accorded similar treatment, after which Father Kohnen turns to the strictly poetical works. Here his criticism is less succinct. Limiting his comments largely to ideological content, he selects significant lines and intercalates them with comments which are at times redundant. Despite this limitation and the lack of aesthetic investigation, the larger meanings are successfully exposed. In the treatment of the two great cycles, *Hymns to the Church* and *Hymns to Germany*, the complementary nature of the two is underlined (the former being the expression of a Catholic German; the latter, that of a German Catholic). The laments of the ardently patriotic hymns, in the light of recent history, echo against the larger background of modern insufficiency treated in *Hymns to the Church*.

A third section treats von le Fort's various studies, essays, and self-criticism. In addition, this 118 page monograph contains an excellent recent portrait of the poet, a badly needed bibliography, a brief biography, and a listing of probably all the major works.

Upon putting the book down, I am distressed by only one thought—the fact that it is written in Portuguese. This puts it beyond the range of most people. Perhaps some director of graduate studies could prevail upon a promising student to prepare a translation as part of a program of studies. It would be a valuable contribution.

St. Michael's College, Vermont

JOHN DEVLIN

Beyond the Range of Words

Pages choisies. By Charles Péguy. Paris: Jacques Bonnot.

L'image dans l'Eve de Péguy. By Jean Onimus. Paris: Cahiers de Péguy.

THE first book—a study for the teacher, a textbook for the student—provides hearty nourishment: prose and poetry selections of the “Frenchest of the French” as Julien Green calls Péguy in the introduction of his translation of *Joan of Arc*.

This is a textbook which many of us have sought for: “hoc erat in votis.” Now our students may grow to know, in this inexpensive edition, the art and

RENASCENCE

the mind of a man whose faith, once found, never faltered. Unfortunately, there is no vocabulary at the end of the book, and a dictionary will of necessity be needed to help the one who knows no French. Here is what the purchaser of this volume will find in this booklet of less than one hundred pages, and in a format similar to the well known Gauthier Editions of the French Classics: a brief account of Péguy's life, an appraisal of his verse, then excerpts from *Lettre du provincial*, *Personalités*, *Notre Patrie*, *Situations*, *le Mystère de la charité de Jeanne d' Arc*, *Porche du Mystère de la deuxième vertu*, *Mystère des Saints Innocents*, *Quatrains*, *Tapisseries*, *Eve*, *Notre Jeunesse*, *Victor Marie Comte Hugo*, *Argent*, *Clio*, *Note conjointe*, and finally Péguy's *Commentary on Eve*. Questions on each excerpt and subjects for composition round out M. Bonnot's contribution to *Classiques Illustrés* Vaubourdolle (Librairie Hachette). It is a worthwhile text for advanced students.

A different and specialized diet for teachers and all lovers of poetry is the study of Dr. Onimus on the imagery in Péguy's *Eve*. This essay on the symbolism and art of Péguy reveals that imaging is the very essential characteristic of *Eve's* thousands of quatrains on "the history of universal life, a prey to the forces of destruction and owing its final salvation to grace."

Since the art of Péguy "has a metaphysical function . . . his imagery is not a sport, but part and parcel of the Revelation." Moreover Péguy thinks à la Pascal and à la Montaigne: "the process of perpetual digression oriented around the same center." "His thought is not analyzed, it is offered as is under a changing veil of metaphors." "A sequence of symbols can indeed replace . . . a logical sequence of ideas." In Péguy "the image is the sole means of reaching certain ultimate realities beyond the range of words and clear consciousness." Onimus calls the latter "images intuitives." They are really Péguy's myths.

And now we come to the substantial section of the book. Three words summarize the remaining three parts of the essay: imaginativeness, vividness, vitality.

In part one Onimus examines Péguy's use of the symbols as "correspondances," and one thinks of Eliot's "objective correlatives"; their form, their implementation to thought, their emotional content, their "renewability." He then surveys the field of intuitive imagery, images of life, death, incarnation, salvation as well as the themes of slime, blood, and "homing" (le retour). Explanation is given in the second part of the coloring, the liveliness, the picturesqueness, the variety and the light irony found in Péguy's images. There follows in the third and last part the discussion of life and growth of these same images as they presented themselves and developed at the mere sound of a word or rhyme in patterns of parallels or contrasts.

The remaining pages 85 to 130 confirm one in the belief that the wellspring of Péguy's mental resourcefulness was his fundamental intuition of original sin and individual degradation counterbalanced by the persistent nostalgia for the return to the past integrity assured by Christ's Redemption.

Around that core of thoughts the melody of his verse harmonized in joy or sorrow, in lamentations or litanies, creating that poetical climate in which only the poet can reveal without being able to describe fully the strength and the beauty of his faith.

Georgetown University

LEO MAYNARD BELLEROSE

A Motto for Hell

Une voix sur Israël. By Paul Claudel. Paris: Gallimard.

L'Évangile d'Isaïe. By Paul Claudel. Paris: Gallimard.

Le Symbolisme de La Salette. By Paul Claudel. Paris: Gallimard.

U*NE voix sur Israël* is an extract from *L'Évangile d'Isaïe*, published before the latter was completed. The "Gospel" of Isaïas is a series of meditative reflections upon the state of the world in the light of the Book of Isaïas. This is a difficult book to read because the train of thought seems to ramble in all directions, doubtlessly on account of the wealth of the author's imaginative collocations, the richness of his thought and experience. His poetic preoccupation with the concrete makes it easy to understand the appeal to him of the imagery found in the Old Testament. The book seems to be a setting down of thoughts that occurred to the author at random, over a long period of prayerful reflection upon the writings of Isaïas, the prophet. The unity of the work is to be found in Isaïas himself; hence the book would well be read with the prophecy of Isaïas open.

Amid Claudel's myriad digressions and seeming irrelevancies there are many veins of gold. The city "filled with horses and chariots without number" reminds him of horsepowerd vehicles and the rumble of invading tanks in 1940. He sees in the city of Damascus, as in Moab, not only a locality on a map, but also a certain attitude of humanity faced with the greatest event in history: "Are you he who is to come, or shall we await another?" the Baptist's disciples asked. Damascus stands for the spirit of frivolity, perpetually awaiting another but not the One who has already come. Moab, however, looks ever backward towards the setting sun instead of towards a perpetual tomorrow; Moab is the fixed attitude of false sorrow which does no more than stare backward in remorse. Both attitudes alike lose sight of the Redeemer.

Christian civilization, Claudel points out, is built on faith in a contractual communication with a personal God. That contract, beginning with the Old Testament, has the religion of Pharaoh for its antithesis. Claudel substitutes for Pharaoh the modern adulation of public opinion. Ancient Egypt is the prototype of modern Europe and the *demos* is Pharaoh's successor.

Scripture, like bread, he says, is best understood not by a laboratory analysis but by eating and digesting it. Learn it by heart, close your eyes and be silent, listen humbly and long to the sounds which it makes within your consciousness. Some idea that pertains to you will disengage itself from the rest: let this win out over all opposition.

Europe, for having rejected God, seems to him to be described in Isaïas 42:25, "And he hath poured out upon him the indignation of his fury, and a strong battle, and hath burned him round about, and he knew not: and set him on fire, and he understood not." Recall, says Claudel, the prison-camp cremations in Germany and Poland.

The great contrast is between God and "the Beast," between God accepted and God rejected. God has only to draw a breath, and behold: a tree exists, or an animal moves around and gets its own food, or finally a man understands when he is spoken to and can ask and answer questions. Modern Jews feel, and write about, a heavy atmosphere of reprobation that is settled upon Israel, verifying the astonishing texts of Leviticus, ch. 26, and of Deuteronomy, ch. 28.

RENAISSANCE

And our own laicized civilization, over much of the earth returning to a more brutal state than paganism itself, presents us with "a profound ennui, an absence of interest in souls and with force instead of love as the principle of social composition." The mark of the beast is in the false assertion of a primacy of physical powers over those of the spirit, of brain over mind, and of sense attraction over the human heart. Schism and heresy are followed by the reign of laicism and mere personal opinion and that modern "humanism" which would separate God from the work of His hands. The mark of the Beast is also seen in the splitting of India into castes and in its "imbecilic doctrine of metempsychosis." From the Beast, also, come the polygamy and license of Islam. Divide and conquer: this is the motto of Hell. On the other hand, the Christian principle of social composition is love and its *signaculum* is the kiss. Only in Christianity is love thus asserted. And this is the Good News which the world of the Beast rejects.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments God often speaks to man in the metaphors which are so much a part of human thinking. Claudel makes a lengthy analysis of our concepts of weight, motion, distance, and value as they are found, in Scriptural terminology, expressing supernatural reality. And "all Scripture is filled with expressions borrowed from the operations of Finance, and what is more natural than to see a specialist at this, Matthew, recruited for the service of the Gospel?" "Forgive us *our debts*"; "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"; "render an account of thy stewardship"; "fruit a hundredfold"; "till thou hast paid the last farthing"—such is the language of redemption.

The promise made to the ancient Jews is still extended to mankind today. The obverse face of this coin is now, as then, a warning and a threat. This is the burden of Our Lady's apparition at La Salette. Claudel sees the prophecies of La Salette carried out in war and pestilence, famine and flood, drought and disaster in our times. The message of the great apparitions in this Marian age is the message of Isaias and the other prophets, the threat of Leviticus, ch. 26, and of Deuteronomy, ch. 28, if we reject God; and a promise of something that, if we accept Him, will be beyond all our hopes and dreams.

St. Joseph's College, Philadelphia

LEWIS DELMAGE, S.J.

Dante and Don Camillo

Dante in Licenza. By Giuseppe Tusiani. Verona, Italy: Nigrizia.

DR. TUSIANI'S first novel shows versatility. He has previously demonstrated his talents in the field of poetry and has shown himself to be an able critic in his work on Emily Dickinson.

In *Dante in Licenza* the author had a threefold purpose: first, to give tribute to the Assumption of Our Blessed Lady; secondly, to present to the reader the work of a small, but effective missionary group, the Comboni Missionaries; thirdly, to bring to task through the means of a mild satire the absurdity of some modern Dante scholars. In particular, he attacks modern life and thought which deviate from the harmonious ideas and ideals of Dante.

The popularity of this book in Italy is in no way difficult to explain, since Italians of all ages are taught an appreciation for the work of Dante. The book

BOOK REVIEWS

came as a release to the Italian public: along with Guareschi's works on Don Camillo, it afforded a change of pace from what had been post-war Italian literature.

The choice of Dante was inevitable not only because he was a singer of Our Lady, but also because by having a medieval man come to earth again, humor and constructive irony would logically be the result. The novel is thus the battle of two worlds—the ancient and the modern—as observed by one who was modern in his ancient world and seems to be ancient in our “modern way of living.” The Dante of the novel is a rather optimistic and mild one, for he looks at things human through the eye of the saint that has been cleansed by more than six centuries of light.

The novel begins with the holy year of 1950 in heaven. Our Lord is looking for a representative to earth. The representative chosen is Dante Alighieri. Dante is ordered to live again with men and to suffer with them; he is to be saved from temptation, for grace would always assist him; he is to remain on earth for only one year. After returning to earth, he is amazed to learn how much had been written about his *Divine Comedy*. While here, he traveled by rail, read modern newspapers, analyzed contemporary advertisements, and freely discussed politics, the strife between capital and labor, and the struggle between communism and democracy. He also traveled to Rome on an American truck and was able to take part in many functions conducted by the Pope. He was moved by the love of the people for the Pope, and the pity of Mary for a troubled world. Dante's trip is concluded as he directs a prayer in the name of humanity assuring God that His creatures are good and virtuous, and in spite of moral decay there is a desire for sanctity.

The novel exhibits humor, perception, and a scholarly imagination. I recommend *Dante in Licenza* for the most discriminating reader.

FRANCIS J. LODATO

Fountains of the Abyss

Les fontaines de l'abîme. By Luc Estang. Paris: Editions Du Seuil.

THESE five hundred pages by M. Estang bring to an impressive conclusion his panoramic portrayal of life, between 1914 and 1939, in Paris and a northerly part of France: *Les fontaines du grand abîme*, written in the twenty-seven months before Christmas, 1953, constitutes the last volume of a trilogy started in October, 1947, and designated collectively before its termination by the title, *Charge d'âmes*. The liminary novel, *Les stigmates*, presented the adult members of the age leaving their mark upon others, wittingly or not, by reason of apathy, strength, or weakness. *Cherchant qui dévorer*, the second phase, continued the report by describing the persistence of evil around and, at times, within the less disenchanted realm of children in a Catholic school in Picardy. M. André Rousseaux observed in *Le Figaro Littéraire*, on the occasion of the publication of Estang's second novel in the series, “Ce sera peut-être un important ouvrage que le cycle romanesque dont M. Luc Estang nous donne aujourd'hui le second volume . . .” Today we have the third volume. M. Rousseaux is to be complimented for his vision. But, more importantly, M. Estang is to be congratulated for his steadfastness of purpose and the fruits thereof.

RENAISSANCE

And one wonders how many times M. Estang has been asked what made him so sure that his labor of six years would find final dimension. In his first two works, the principal areas of action and implication were adult life in the French capital and childhood in one of the provinces, and the currents of fiction often spilled over into each other as the adults or children moved, for one reason or another, into spheres tangent to their own. So critical readers might have well wondered what could be added in a third novel, how the trilogy might be knit to the end, how there would be a continuance, for the author and the public, in a fresh and still rewarding vein. Had not humans of every lustrum and both sexes, and of diverse stations, been delineated clearly enough as they showed their profiles and cast their shadows across backgrounds both rural and urban, academic and commercial, clean and maculate? Had not a significant number of humanity's faces been portrayed in all seasons as Estang's characters precipitated conclusions; or as they awoke to find conclusions crystallized about and upon them? Had not failure, success, or even single and waiting opportunities been entertained and rejected with sufficient frequency by both great and small?

If these were pertinent questions, they were also mere anticipations of Estang's conviction that his text might never be complete without *Les fontaines de l'abîme*. For there is in this book ample and compelling matter for whoever does not run while reading: the adults of *Les stigmates*, having figured in the second novel as well, survive not only to vanish in their turn but also to endure in the memory of others. And the children of *Cherchant qui dévorait*, having reached the barriers of manhood and womanhood, for better or for worse, testify to a search for meaning in the world.

It is not possible to record here the ultimate dispositions accorded to M. and Mme Charmard, the abbé Douve, Mamy, Cassagne, and all the others appearing as adults in all volumes. But it would be remiss not to report that one of the more highly illuminated of this group is still that Buddha-like wonder, M. Théodore Valentin, whom it is now quite obvious that Estang could not allow to escape forever into some lampless alley. Staid behind his stomach and precisely articulate, M. Valentin might seem one moment a solemn portrait of what is more suited to caricature or then, at other moments, a caricature of what is more ordinarily reserved for solemn portrait. Yet, whatever the mood, it is now clear that this man of the world, compelling the attention of all around him, continues to live for his creator in somewhat the same fashion that Goriot had a more than fictional existence for Balzac. One of the more arresting chapters of *Les fontaines du grand abîme* is devoted to Théodore Valentin's last days on earth. His material means of support wrested from him through chicanery and his health undermined beyond repair, Théodore comes to find his peace with his God and himself through a priesthood that he would not abandon in spite of his own flight from Holy Orders. It is a curious parallel that Balzac and Estang should draw their patient patriarchs so fondly in life, and then remain with them so completely in death. And there is eulogy for M. Valentin: when Mamy sees his mortal remains enhanced by the bright art of death and the quick skill of morticians, she exclaims with exaltation, "He is handsome! He is handsome!"

As for the minor characters presented for the first time, they quickly don the raiment of the fiction. At first inevitably seeming to do no more than to appear out of the privilege of literary tradition, or perhaps for the purpose of

BOOK REVIEWS

fostering authenticity by virtue of their contemporary quality, they emerge with a major argument from their marginal origins. Two examples may suffice. Erich, the Nazi with homosexual leanings, parades at first as a Frenchman in a *fin de siècle* trenchcoat. But he is also the means by which the reader is transported to pre-1940 Germany to glimpse, among other things, Hitler and his Zeppelinwiese. M. Berrascone, editor of *Les Rumeurs*, is a member of the fifth column and an expert in the craft of propaganda. Beyond this, he is a man asserting that blood and ink smell alike in their founts. An employer of men, his favorite thesis in his office is that humanity is an illusion to be used. It is a happy detail that his denture is black.

The principal themes and the larger panels of action are afforded by Elie, Toine, and Paule de Borre. So at least a word must be said of them separately in addition to observing that, in the scheme of the fiction, they are lodged above the common denominator of recent adulthood. The first named of the trio initiates the action of the novel: Elie is standing in revolt without knowing precisely what to do with his abruptly acquired independence except to court an immediate future in the crossing streets of Paris. Subsequently learning from his step-father the full measure of the tragedy that befell his natural father early in the first war, he is obliged himself to leave a wife and unborn child for military service. At last acknowledging forces and values beyond and yet only too immediately within a sphere that he had held to be his own alone, he comes to the truth of life close to him. Unlike Elie, Toine sees gracefully and swiftly that he must not and cannot be isolated or insulated; gaining his priesthood and struggling to give himself to others so that they may have the knowledge in which he abides, his last word to Elie on the eve of war is compassion. As for the feminine member of the trio, Paule de Borre, she may prove the most extraordinary of the group, at least from the viewpoint of the history of French fiction. Unlike her prototypes in the eighteenth century, she is not introduced with malice aforethought in order to serve as a vehicle for satire or scandal; the verso of her Romantic forbears, she is not a golden madonna bathing silently in an aura of paradisaal peace. Constantly filled with misgivings at first and increasingly at grips with even the subtler sorts of pride, such as the temptation to dramatize renouncement, she flees from her vocation only to embrace the knowledge that she is to return to the community of Poor Clares. Ultimately, she becomes *soeur Paule-Marie du Seigneur ressuscité*. The documentation which Estang provides for Paule de Borre is as compelling as the study of character developed in her names, both family and religious; especially in the chapter presenting her final vows of Poverty, Chastity, Obedience, and Enclosure, with the Daughters of St. Clare.

The form of *Les fontaines de l'abîme* is much the same as that utilized previously: the principal organizational scheme into eleven books and the division of each book into its own chapters repeat the pattern of *Les stigmates* and *Cherchant qui dévorer*. However, unlike the two earlier novels, the last of the three works is also divided into three "parts." The manner of the prose seems more regular in spite of frequent condensations of expression that result from Estang's intense and constantly varied handling of his own language and the idiom within his language: it is no happy accident that his characters speak with a current tongue, whether in the vernacular of Paris or the dialect of Picardy. There are again the cinematic sequences, wherein characters move through

various settings as they maintain conversation and motives. This procedure is employed deftly, and a photographic record, in the Greek sense of the adjective, is secured without detriment to the collating of narrative, psychological, or thematic signs. Two instances of this technique: the opening pages devoted to Yvette and Elie as they walk to, by, and from the Seine; the conversation between Toine and the abbé Douve on a beach strewn with white and empty shells at low tide. Another feature employed by the movies that Estang refines is the flashback, whereby past events, not left to darken in solitude, are welded with the present in order to make the future coherent, if not total, for all. Other pronounced features of Estang continue to be his frequent allusions to the Old and New Testaments, snatches of ecclesiastical Latin, references to the doctrine, history, and liturgy of the Church. He persists in the poet's habit of eyeing the weather, of lingering with the season, of noting the moment of day or night as a given scene unfolds its cloth. And, of course, there is a frequency of allusion to contemporary events and personalities on the international level, beginning with civil war in Spain and ending with Hitler, Munich, Mussolini, Poland, Roosevelt, and Stalin.

It were superfluous to state, by way of conclusion, that *Les stigmates*, *Cherchant qui dévorer*, and *Les fontaines de l'abîme* are a development in fiction of Estang's spiritual autobiography, *Le passage du Seigneur*: this earnest book, as startling as Rousseau's *Confessions*, is the key to an understanding of the way in which Estang found meaning in the world. Having given his account of the workings of the intellect and the soul alternating between rebellion and salvation, he has turned to fiction for an art. Elie's determination to live each day without reference is not improvised; nor are Théodore Valentin's passage, Toine's plea for compassion, or Paule de Borre's conquests in the name of prayer and sacrifice.

SPIRE PITOU

Tragic Martyrdom

Renunciation as a Tragic Focus: A Study of Five Plays. By Eugene H. Falk. University of Minnesota. \$3.00.

THE death of the martyr presents to us not the defeat, but the victory of the individual; the issue of a conflict in which the individual is ranged on the same side as the higher power, and the sense of suffering consequently lost in that of moral triumph."

Thus did Aristotle and his commentator, S. H. Butcher, exclude the saint and the martyr from the brotherhood of true tragic heroes. But Mr. Falk, in this searching and finely controlled study of the tragic power that may inhere in dramatic acts of martyrdom and self-sacrifice, makes a strong case for the martyr's right, at least, to membership in that exalted band. Like a good debater, he does not challenge the validity of the classic definitions of tragedy and of the tragic hero, but only their limitations. May not these definitions be enlarged?

What does a martyr do? Acting from a sense of duty, he sacrifices himself, he renounces life, he ranges himself on the side of the higher powers. But, if the protagonist's "mortal will" to live, his love of life and happiness, thereby suffer a "distressing and keenly felt" defeat, may not renunciation become the culmination of a truly tragic act? Very well, then, suggests Mr. Falk; let us

BOOK REVIEWS

take two indubitable tragedies, *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone*, and let us see whether their great tragic power can be shown to derive from just such acts of renunciation, born of a sense of duty to a power beyond man. Can they? They can, indeed—and brilliantly, too, as Mr. Falk does it. Incidentally, I can attest that his analysis of *Oedipus*, with the motives and emotions of the plot so carefully charted, scene by scene, is immediately and practically helpful to a director staging a production of the play.

Having proved his case, Mr. Falk could stop here, if this were all he wished to do. But he is not contentious; rather, he is genuinely interested in making a thorough examination of renunciation as a tragic focus. So he proceeds, in the same careful and fruitful way, to examine three other plays: Corneille's *Polyeucte*, Maeterlinck's *Aglavaine and Selysette*, and Albert Samain's *Polyphème*. Compared to the two Greek tragedies, however, the three plays are shown to have protagonists whose "worldly aspirations appear less certain of realization and the will to live therefore less genuine." Thus, in the order given, "these plays represent a progression from authentic to seeming renunciation." Consequently, the tragic power inhering in them becomes progressively weaker.

The most extensive study in the book is devoted to *Polyeucte*, and rightly so; for it is the critical point in the descending scale of tragic power. Honor, not God or the gods, becomes the "higher power" on whose side the hero ranges himself to achieve his martyrdom. Here Mr. Falk goes beyond the obvious dramatic ironies of the play, to develop additional ironies that might have surprised Corneille himself. For honor is shown to present to the tragic hero, not a dilemma, but a real impasse that involves Polyeucte in such a complexity of motives that self-deception becomes inescapable. The protagonist cannot, therefore, act from true self-knowledge, as do Oedipus and Antigone. It should be stated that Mr. Falk's assessment of the play runs counter to much critical opinion that cites *Polyeucte* as proof that Christian tragedy is possible, and that sees divine grace as the most important influence in the play.

If they strive for tragic stature, Maeterlinck's and Samain's plays fall short of it. So they prove, through no fault of Mr. Falk's, to be decidedly less interesting. And, except for the fact that his choice of plays gives his study a pleasing elegance of form, one could wish that Mr. Falk had dispensed with *Polyphème*, an admitted closet-drama, for something worthier of his analytic talents. Where, for instance, would the martyrdom of Becket, in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, stand in this descending scale? How much of a mortal will to live, how much love of life and happiness, could the Archbishop of Canterbury be found to have? Becket attained (or did he?) to true self-knowledge, in routing the last and greatest temptation, "to do the right thing for the wrong reason." But how "distressing and keenly felt"—both for audience and protagonist—is his defeat? How agonizing is his renunciation? In short, is Eliot's play a tragedy? Mr. Falk's answer to that would be worth hearing.

The book could be taken as a model, for its concentration on the task at hand, its freedom from footnotes and from citations of authority, and, above all, for its excellent writing. In tone, in precision, in flexibility of language, its prose is as admirable as its method.

Let me add only that this shapely, 92-page study is introduced by an essay, "Tragedy and Personal Humanism," by Professor Norman J. DeWitt; and, unless critical methods must be labelled, the introduction seems largely pointless.

It contains some amusing jibes: "The Western system of values seems to crumble into existentialism abroad and into panel discussions at home"; or again, "There is no trace of pity or fear in the *Poetics*." (True, but why should there be?) Professor DeWitt is tilting at the aridities—really, the excesses—of Aristotelianism. Yet Mr. Falk's work seems to me admirably analytic, and Aristotelian in the best sense. If this is Personal Humanism, let us have more of it.

Loyola University

HUGH DICKINSON

Flux and Privacy

Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel. By Robert Humphrey. University of California. \$2.75.

HOW potent is stream of consciousness as a literary device? Can it be widely used, or must it be restricted to the area of the abnormal, to the "most intimate thought that lies nearest the unconscious," as Dujardin put it? Historically, who have been its forebears? Philosophically, is stream of consciousness shaped in the matrix of Freudianism, and if so, does this lessen its utility to the Christian writer?

These are important questions. But Mr. Humphrey cannot consider all of them in his short and unpretentious study. He chooses to concentrate on the technical aspects of stream of consciousness as these have been worked out in post-World-War-I fiction and as they can be documented and illustrated. His choice has been a seminal one, for, as he goes on to demonstrate, these techniques play primary roles in some of our major novels, and for better or worse they have entered the main stream of modern fiction.

Mr. Humphrey's first task is to define what he is talking about: "Stream of consciousness fiction [is] a type . . . in which the basic emphasis is placed on exploration of the prespeech levels of consciousness for the purpose, primarily, of revealing the psychic being of the characters." *Moby Dick*, *Les Fauxmonnaieurs*, and *Of Time and the River* are not included as stream of consciousness novels, because their use of the interior monologue tends to be logically ordered. *Pilgrimage*, *Ulysses*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Sound and the Fury* are included because their versions of consciousness are not rationally controlled. Having prepared his reader for the thick tangle of uncensored consciousness in his study, Mr. Humphrey sets himself the task of demonstrating how such modern novelists as Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and William Faulkner explore the psychic jungle. They do so by means of several stream of consciousness techniques, the most important of which is the use of *interior monologue*, either direct (no author intervention) or indirect (limited author intervention). Other techniques include *dramatic* or *verse forms* (not very successful) and the *soliloquy* (very successful; the sentence structure adapts to the character's consciousness). These techniques suggest the use of "cinematic devices"—such as fade-outs, cutting, and flash-backs—to control the flux of consciousness. These devices are used in time- and space-montage "to show interrelation or association of ideas, such as a rapid succession of images or the superimposition of image on image, or the surrounding of a focal image by related ones." Typography and punctuation are also utilized to control the flow.

But flux, Mr. Humphrey argues, is only one of the primal qualities of

BOOK REVIEWS

consciousness. The other is privacy—especially important when you are dealing with highly introspective characters. Now, intellectual privacy is characterized by incoherence, discontinuity, and highly personalized vision. The writer conveys incoherence through the use of psychological free association which will appear incongruous out of context but which will be doubly meaningful to the alert reader who enters the character's mental universe. Discontinuity is conveyed through the suggestive use of standard rhetorical figures like litotes and anacoluthon. And private vision, with its irony and multiple meanings, is conveyed through symbol and image.

Flux. Privacy. But what of plot? Or, to put it another way, what is the unifying element in the stream-of-consciousness novel? Plot is expendable (but not always, as Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* demonstrates). In place of plot there may be unity of time (*Mrs. Dalloway* takes place within twenty-four hours) or place (it is confined to one district of London) or character (that muscular masterpiece, *Ulysses*, is presented from the viewpoint of but three characters). The unifying element might be *natural cyclic schemes* like the tides or the seasons, or *theoretic cyclic schemes* like music structures or Vico's historical theory. *Previously established literary patterns* (such as Homer's *Odyssey*) might furnish the basis of unity, or perhaps the entire novel may depend on some elaborate *symbolic structure*. But whatever the unifying element, Mr. Humphrey warns us, we must not expect limpid clarity. Any stream of consciousness novel that remains true to the range of the human intellect will be susceptible to muddiness and formlessness.

Mr. Humphrey's study is the third in the University of California's "Perspectives in Criticism" series. If the others in the series are as nicely organized and as well written as this one they will certainly be worth the attention of all who teach, write, or criticize modern fiction. Mr. Humphrey's neat, ungaudy study has not only filled a void in our thinking, it has paved the way for numerous other studies which will answer the important questions which he modestly declines to discuss.

St. John's University

THOMAS J. BEARY

Sex and Sacrament

Le Couple chrétien—l'Amour et le Mariage devant l'Eglise. By Daniel-Rops, Jacques Madaule, R. P. Riquet, and Gustave Thibon. Paris: Amiot, Dumont.

THE writers of these essays have thoroughly considered the various facets of conjugal love. The book takes its title from the introduction ("Portrait d'un couple chrétien") in which Henry Daniel-Rops, in line with St. Francis of Sales, presents King Louis IX and his wife, Marguerite of Provence, as "the Christian couple."

For this portrait Daniel-Rops has drawn from history, from the candid descriptions of the faithful Joinville, and from the canonization of Louis. His study shows that Daniel-Rops did not choose the obviously ideal case, if by ideal is meant a union of complete accord, with both partners "progressing toward heaven along a path without thorns." Nor is their love presented as "completely spiritualised" by an "ineffable flame." Difficulties, irritations, and discord were very real in the life of this grave young king with a wife whose tastes

RENAISSANCE

had been formed in the gay and courtly atmosphere of Arles and Avignon. And then there was Blanche of Castille, who would not diminish her dominance of her son Louis. The fidelity of Louis and Marguerite in spite of difficulties bears witness to the intrinsic virtue of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

This portrait exemplifies the ideas of the Jesuit Father Riquet who, in "Les Fins du mariage," presents the primary and secondary ends of marriage as safeguarded and bound up in a perfect subordination to the last ends of man. Mutual perfection and sanctification find a place in this total view.

René de Frondeville contributes a study on a delicate and subtle subject, "La Chair sanctifiée." According to de Frondeville, theologians, with few exceptions, have not plumbed the depths of the problem of "the sanctification of the flesh in marriage." This study is concerned primarily with the question of attaining the unity of one's being. There are, however, ambiguities in M. de Frondeville's approach. He regards as a "fundamental contradiction" the divergence between ascetical-mystical doctrines of the need for purification and the words of God in Genesis: "Increase and multiply." The implication is that either there are two possibilities entirely different in kind of sanctity, or the ascetical-mystical saints are mistaken. Actually the contradiction is only apparent, if one keeps in mind the *ascending* levels of union. It would appear that M. de Frondeville is trying to work out an order of spiritual realities in which married love has no need of asceticism beyond the daily sacrifices required of it.

Contemporary interest focuses on nature subject to grace. It is not enough, however, to state that nature is good because God made it and redeemed it. The issue at stake is not that nature is not evil. It is, rather, a question of the total gift of the soul to God and all that is implied to bring about pure and therefore complete receptivity. M. de Frondeville admits the difficulties of the problem when he refers to the statement of the Council of Trent that concupiscence remains in the baptized soul. In application of texts, however, M. de Frondeville makes many easy assumptions which need to be questioned, as well as his interpretation of *Casti Connubii*.

There are also disturbing uses of such terms as "mystical touches" on the natural plane, and "natural mysticism." These terms are romantic and misleading. With a giddy disregard of levels, Frondeville applies the Ninth Prayer of St. Catherine of Siena to the desired unity in marriage of flesh and spirit. St. Catherine was speaking of one of the highest states of mystical prayer: transforming union. One may not forget the ascetical purification which precedes it.

If so many objections are made to this study, it is not because the reviewer does not believe in the possibility of holiness in the married state. Rather it is because the danger of misdirection is great. In the last analysis the ontology of the union of the soul with God stands behind and permeates the whole body of teaching and *experience* of the ascetics and mystics.

The most valuable contribution in the volume is "Le Mystère de l'amour," by Jacques Madaule who has perceived the charm, the tragedy, and the dimension of the infinite in redemption of human love. As is well known, Madaule brings to his subject a profound knowledge of the works of Claudel.

Madaule sees the mystery of love in all the complex needs of the person and of the couple, all within the framework of man's final end, God. The individual achieves "wholeness" only in going out of himself; he retains the desire for liberty in spite of the exigencies of love. If, in human love, the one

BOOK REVIEWS

loved usurps the place of God, becomes a mask to hide God, then hell itself is installed on earth.

There is another possibility, however, which Madaule traces. The desire which creatures awaken becomes a desert land of thirst and hunger. This desert can become a land refreshed with springs and manna, but only on condition that we do not take this desert for our fatherland; this desert is only a passage way. "Each of the lovers must accept the fact of being for the other *only* this passage, and it is to this height that Christian marriage invites them." "For one of the essential roles of human love is to disappoint us in order that we turn toward the sole, unique, and true love. One must accept this lack, and this insufficiency; and it is, perhaps, in just this acceptance that is found the gravity and the sanctity of marriage."

Simone Weil insisted upon an almost forgotten element of love, compassion; Madaule adds that this compassion is at the source of tenderness, and tenderness is the purification of desire. With this transformation "it is no longer in the eyes of the other that happiness is found but in the fact that both are gazing, now, at the extremity of the earthly horizon, striving toward the same goal, in a desire which earth cannot fill." The subject of the Christian couple has been illuminated considerably by M. Madaule's perceptive study.

The anonymous writer who signs himself "XXX" traces "Le Visage de l'amour" in Catholic literature. He distinguishes between the psychological and metaphysical traditions in literature, an artificial distinction which permits him to disregard the quality of the artifacts. The writers in the psychological tradition see love only in "the relative," in the perspective of sin. In the metaphysical tradition the writer envisions love in the light of the Absolute from the perspective of the Redemption. The one observes; the other contemplates.

Mauriac is in the psychological tradition. Such a statement is saved from being trite only by his explanation that Mauriac's observation circumscribes his characters in their destiny. The point is well made that love, even carnal love, is mysterious in its essence and is fully understood only in the glance of God. "And God is not an observer."

Kierkegaard's influence on modern writers has, of course, been noted many times. Attention is drawn to his influence, entirely unproven, on Ernest Hello, Léon Bloy, Georges Bernanos, Luc Estang, Pierre Emmanuel, and Jean Cayrol. Kierkegaard's serious approach to life and love in relation to God is said to have given direction to the revolt of the French writers. Without the Pascal revival and the Heidegger-Sartre brand of Existentialism, there would not be the faintest trace of even an indirect Kierkegaard influence. How should Hello and Bloy have been influenced by him? With Bloy, perhaps through his wife. But who has ever proved it?

He notes one of the most striking characteristics of this twentieth century Catholic literature, a certain thirst for purity. In *Les Stigmates* Luc Estang has searched the mystery of souls in relation to God and Satan. From this height he sees that impurity is essentially one of the most terrible consequences of pride. Again in *Monsieur Ouine*, by Bernanos, the Curé de Fenouille warns that "nostalgia for purity" will result in a wave of suicides. This brings to mind the most poignant case of all, *La Nouvelle Mouchette*. One wonders how reference to it could possibly have been omitted even in so brief a study.

The works of Claudel are seen to be an effort to synthesize Eros and Agape

RENAISSANCE

at the very moment when the emphasis would seem to be on their contradictions. The eternal question of Claudel's attitude toward marriage is touched upon briefly. His profound esteem for the sacrament of marriage is shown in a letter to Coventry Patmore, but the present essay has evaded the more subtle depths of the problem by simply stating that Claudel would not wish to make of the marriage state "a state of conflict." This does nothing to illuminate the case of Ann and Elizabeth Vercors.

Péguy is placed at the heart of the problem, because Péguy lived for the reconciliation of the flesh and the spirit in purity of heart and fidelity to the Incarnation. This theory, however, fails to convince. Without intending to minimize Péguy's greatness, one still asks: Has Péguy probed the depths of human relations, has he explored the problems of conjugal love as Mauriac, Marcel, and Claudel have? Has he envisaged the depths and heights in mystical love as has Bernanos? One senses in these attempts to be neat and tidy with categories a desperate urge to prove something, forgetting that this very "proof" would deprive a mystery of its essence.

The chapter concludes with words of praise for Graham Greene, an echo of the general enthusiasm with which the French have accepted his novels.

Other authors treat of topics related to this general subject, such as the education of girls and the education of boys; the chapters are characterized on the whole by a saneness of approach. The chapter on current writers is necessarily limited. The most rewarding part of the book is that the reader is given the opportunity to weigh the views of M. de Frondeville against those of M. Madaule. It is hoped that their remarks will stimulate further consideration of these human problems.

SISTER FRANCIS ELLEN RIORDAN

Christian Art

L'Art Sacré Moderne. By Joseph Picard. Paris: B. Arthaud.

Art Sacré au XXe siècle. By P.-R. Régamey. Paris: Cerf.

THE question of sacred art has become, in the past fifteen years, the subject of passionate discussions in Europe and especially in France. So many factors are involved that it is not easy to make a clear résumé of the problem; it is even more difficult to submit principles capable of satisfying the artist as well as the faithful, the educated museum-goer as well as the pious old lady, not to mention Canon Law and diocesan prescriptions.

Two recent publications exhibit genuine enthusiasm and competence in trying to put order into this complicated subject.

Picard's book attacks the question from the historical side. The author, one of the founders of the French review *L'Art Sacré*, leads his readers in a readable and alert style through different phases of the evolution of sacred art from the second half of the nineteenth century to the present day. Delacroix, Desvallières, Chagall, Rouault, and Matisse prepared the way for modern art in France. Picard tells about the evolution of architecture, painting, sculpture, and decoration. His book is an excellent introduction for the layman, but even the advanced art-lover will find it pleasant and interesting. There are almost one hundred illustrations.

RENASCENCE

One observation, however: I would have liked a few pages explaining the relation of the plastic arts to the other fields of Christian art, to the evolution of sacred music (Chausson, C. Franck, Poulenc, Messiaen, etc.), and to Claudel, Péguy, and Bernanos in the literary field.

Father Régamey's book exacts much more effort from the reader. In fact, this book is a *Summa* of sacred art, written with seriousness and methodicity worthy of an Aquinas. Who can question the authority of Father Régamey? By his articles, books, and lectures he has acquired a world-wide reputation in the field of Christian art.

His voluminous book (more than 450 closely printed pages) is divided into three sections. In the first, he shows the real meaning of the word *sacred* (*le sacré*) and explains the requirements and the tradition of the Church in regard to sacred art. In the second part, he investigates the meaning, the conditions, and the possibilities of art in a masterly manner. Being himself an artist and having devoted a large part of his life to the teaching and propagation of sacred art, he moves easily around the arguments pro and con. Moreover, it is impossible not to detect his concern as a priest and monk (Dominican) for the "scandal" of the cheap Saint-Sulpice styled mass-productions, and sometimes we feel his indignant impatience bursting through the pages of his well-meditated and otherwise objective book.

In the third part—the most important in my opinion—Father Régamey contemplates the *drama* of Christian art. Faith and art, Canon Law and the artistic need of the faithful, progress and tradition, individualism and everyday piety are shown in continuous tension. Again and again he raises his voice against the pious mediocrity of certain forms of "art," and contests in a brilliant chapter the authority and competence of "parish councils" in the matter of sacred art.

The book is completed by an ample appendix and various analytical tables. It is superfluous to say how much I recommend the reading of Father Régamey's book for everyone—but especially for pastors, church-rectors, sisters, and all art lovers.

Marquette University

RALPH MARCH, S.O. Cist.

Medieval Becky Sharp

Leopards and Lilies. By Alfred Duggan. Coward-McCann. \$3.50.

WHY do people read historical novels? Many of us can remember when conscientious moderns, bored with the drabness of a post-industrial world, turned back to the Middle Ages for high romance, for the beauty that never was on sea or land, to say nothing of Main Street. Later the children of those moderns, still bored by the dull securities of contemporary middle-class civilization, turned to the Middle Ages for horrors and excesses and atrocities that the progress of civilization was supposed to have made obsolete. Needless to say all that was before the second World War when the day-to-day headlines made even King John seem pretty tame.

The question still remains, but for one book we can answer with confidence. If you are interested in finding out what it was like to live in the Middle Ages, in a fairly privileged situation, then Alfred Duggan's *Leopards and Lilies* will

BOOK REVIEWS

give you a good idea of the realities of life in the England of the Magna Carta and King John. Alfred Duggan has a minute and lively grasp on the physical setting of the time, and he knows how to use his knowledge in an active, dramatic fashion. One will learn a great deal about the homely circumstances of life in that period, for example, how far from quiet the medieval castle was at night and how far from picturesque the crowded keep of a besieged castle could become before the floor blew up.

But more important one learns something of what it was like to live in the framework of medieval society. Mr. Duggan chooses an interesting vantage point for this human survey, that of a woman of the aristocracy. The lady, Margaret Fitzgerald, reminds one at many points of that favorite modern heroine, Becky Sharp. She is not beautiful, but she is a bright, lively-minded and precocious young woman. She has been well brought up as regards the realities of her position in the world, and she fully accepts them. As the motherless daughter of an absentee father she has had occasion to learn how to hold her own and to defend her more than adequate notion of her position in society. The result is an appealing but somewhat alarming thirteen-year-old.

One watches her make the most of her father's marital arrangements—there was not much else she could do. And one sympathizes with her gropings for something brighter than the prospects of life in the seclusion of an unwarlike knight's castle. But one notes, too, the hardness of heart that keeps her from pity in her human relations and genuine romance even in her dreams. And when life does give her the lively, and at times exciting, company of the Norman adventurer who is her forced second husband, she is highly selective in her responses, enjoying what ministers to her comfort and prestige but lazily neglecting to understand what goes on beyond her immediate world and, still more seriously, refusing to venture beyond the fastness of herself. Some of her failure was due to her inborn prejudices, some to her essential conventionality, but most of it to her basic self-centeredness. She affords us, therefore, an illuminating peep-hole upon a stirring and complicated scene. And though she had yearnings for the reputation of a romantic heroine, she gives us an essentially unromantic view of the world. Indeed, she is so clear-eyed that it is hard to remember how young she was even when she met the final test of loyalty and failed catastrophically.

Mr. Duggan's style is always direct and clear. When necessary, he does not hesitate to interpose a swift and eminently readable analysis of a complicated political and social situation. But he knows how to make the context clear without breaking the advance of his story or marring its temper. One has a feeling at the end that this is how it might have been to live in that time, and a twentieth-century woman will give thanks that she didn't. It is a decidedly salutary book for the determinedly modern reader, whether of the escapist or the temporally isolationist bent, and once one begins to read it, it's hard to lay it down.

University of Wisconsin

HELEN C. WHITE

Index to Vol. VII

ESSAYS

Title	Page
Four quartets: contemplatio ad amorem, by William T. Noon	3
French influences on Gertrud von le Fort, by John J. Devlin	63
Hopkins' imagery: the relation of his journal to his poetry, by John Pick	30
Léon Bloy: imperfect splendor, by Stanislas Fumet	11
Madame Swetchine's salon, by Dorothy Poulain	121
Paris letter, by Fernand Vial	187
Paul Claudel: prison and the satin slipper, by Barbara Selna	171
Poetry and Patrice de la Tour du Pin, by J. C. Reid	17
Sartre and Christianity, by Robert Champigny	59
Shape of the lightning: Randall Jarrell, by C. E. Maguire	115
Shape of the lightning: Randall Jarrell (cont.), by C. E. Maguire	181
Victorian vision: an Angelican pilgrim novel, by Anne Fremantle	129

REVIEWS

Title	Page
Agamemnon, by William Alfred (Peter J. Seng)	202
An anthology of Catholic poets, ed. Sir Shane Leslie (John Pick)	42
Art sacré au XXe siècle, by P. -R. Régamey (Ralph March)	219
L'art sacré moderne, by Joseph Pichard (Ralph March)	219
Aurore souterraine, by Claude Vigée (George Ferenczy)	45
Besuch auf Godenholm, by Ernst Jünger (Josef Schwarz)	142
Les biens de ce monde, by René Guy-Cadou (Alba-Marie Fazio)	54
Bread in the wilderness, by Thomas Merton (Sr. M. Thérèse, S.D.S.)	103
Car enfin je vous aime, by Pierre Emmanuel (Sr. Marie Philip, C.S.J.)	160
Choir of muses, by Etienne Gilson (Mother Grace, O.S.U.)	91
Les cœurs avides, by Gabriel Marcel (Erwin W. Geissmann)	156
The complete poems of Lionel Johnson, ed. Iaian Fletcher (John Pick)	159
The complex fate, by Marius Bewley (John H. Meyer)	154
Le couple chrétien, by Daniel-Rops et al (Sr. Francis Ellen Riordan)	216
Coups de soliel, by Henry de Montherlant (Spire Pitou)	108
Dante in Licenza, by Giuseppe Tusiani (Francis J. Lodato)	209
Le Dieu nu, by Robert Margerit (Josephine Vallerie)	157
Eloge de la volupté, by Marcel Jouhandeau (Ralph March)	51
Endeavors of art, by Madeline Doran (P. Albert Duhamel)	44
Ernst Jünger, by J. P. Stern (Josef Schwarz)	142
L'évangile d'Isaïe, by Paul Claudel (Lewis Delmage)	208
The faith and modern man, by Romano Guardini (H. A. Reinhold)	151
Federico Garcia Lorca, by Roy Campbell (Margaret Bates)	50
La flamme et le vent, by Henri Herzfeld (Eugene F. Murphy)	43
Les fontaines de l'abîme, by Luc Estang (Spire Pitou)	210
Gertrud von le Fort, by Hajo Jappe (Paul G. Glies)	41
Gertrud von le Fort, by Mansueto Kohnen (John Devlin)	205
Graham Greene, by Jacques Madaule (A. Huntcamp)	151
De la grandeur, by Marcel Jouhandeau (Ralph March)	51
Hélène, ou le règne végétal, by René Guy-Cadou (Alba-Marie Fazio)	54
Histoire religieuse de la troisième république, by Adrien Dansette (Edward Gargan)	149
Hommes et idées d'aujourd'hui, by Claude Mauriac (John H. Meyer)	137
L'image dans l'Eve de Péguy, by Jean Onimus (Leo Maynard Bellerose)	206
L'imposteur, by Marcel Jouhandeau (Ralph March)	51
Journal, by Paul Régner (Spire Pitou)	39
Leopards and Lilies, by Alfred Duggan (Helen C. White)	220
Lettres à Bernard Esdras-Gosse, by Max Jacob (Bernard Facteau)	93
Lettres à un ami, by Max Jacob (Bernard Facteau)	93
Littérature du XXe siècle et christianisme, vol. 1, by Charles Møller (Spire Pitou)	196
Littérature du XXe siècle et christianisme, vol. 2, by Charles Møller (Spire Pitou)	196
Love among the ruins, by Evelyn Waugh (John Pick)	39

RENASCENCE

Mary Magdalene, by Raymond-Leopold Bruckberger (Elizabeth Murphy Nydegger)	99
Norms for the novel, by Harold C. Gardiner (Victor M. Hamm)	98
Nos ombres qui cherchent, by René Rivet (George Ferenczy)	45
Pages choisies, by Charles Péguy (Leo Maynard Bellerose)	206
Poèmes de Morven le Gaëlique, by Max Jacob (Bernard Facteau)	93
The poetry of T. S. Eliot, by D. E. S. Maxwell (H. Marshall McLuhan)	158
Poets and mystics, by E. I. Watkin (Victor M. Hamm)	147
The quest of Alain-Fournier, by Robert Gibson (Wallace Fowlie)	148
Renunciation as a tragic focus, by Eugene H. Falk (Hugh Dickinson)	213
Stream of consciousness in the modern novel, by Robert Humphrey (Thomas J. Beary)	215
Le symbolisme de La Salette, by Paul Claudel (Lewis Delmage)	208
Textes sous une occupation, by Henry de Montherlant (Spire Pitou)	108
Über le Linie, by Ernst Jünger (Josef Schwarz)	142
Une voix sur Israël, by Paul Claudel (Lewis Delmage)	208
The verbal icon, by W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. (Victor M. Hamm)	162
Vers un héroïsme integral dans Péguy, by Rosemary Goldie (Leo Maynard Bellerose)	50
The view from the parsonage, by Sheila Kaye-Smith (Robert O. Bowen)	135
Der waldgang, by Ernst Jünger (Josef Schwarz)	142
Weeping cross, by Henry Longan Stuart (Francis X. Duggan)	96

ESSAYISTS

Champigny, Robert	59	Pick, John	30
Devlin, John J.	63	Poulain, Dorothy	121
Fremantle, Anne	129	Reid, J. C.	17
Fumet, Stanislas	11	Selna, Barbara	171
Maguire, C. E.	115, 181	Vial, Fernand	187
Noon, William T.	3		

REVIEWERS

Bates, Margaret	46	Leo, Ulrich	85
Beary, Thomas J.	215	Lodato, Francis J.	209
Bellerose, Leo Maynard	50, 206	March, Ralph	51, 219
Bruckberger, Raymond-Leopold	70	McLuhan, H. Marshall	158
Delmage, Lewis	208	Meyer, John H.	80, 137, 154
Devlin, John J.	205	Murphy, Eugene F.	43
Dickinson, Hugh	213	Nydegger, Elizabeth Murphy	99
Duggan, Francis	96	Philip, Sister Marie	160
Duhamel, Albert P.	44	Pick, John	39, 42, 159
Facteau, Bernard	93	Pitou, Spire	39, 54, 108, 196, 210
Ferenczy, George	45	Reinhold, H. A.	151
Fowlie, Wallace	148	Riordan, Sister Francis Ellen	216
Gargan, Edward	149	Sargent, Daniel	102
Geissmann, Erwin W.	156	Schwarz, Josef	142
Glies, Paul G.	41	Thérèse, Sister M.	103
Grace, Mother	91	Vallier, Josephine	157
Hamm, Victor M.	98, 147, 162	White, Helen C.	220
Huntcamp, A.	157		

The Review of Politics

**A General Cultural Journal
with a dominantly political and historical
appraisal of current problems in
world affairs**

The Idea

"It was apparent at once that we did not want a political or historical review construed in any narrow sense, although we had no instinct to ignore the presentation, in the way of science, of facts, techniques and processes. What we desired was a kind of universal publication drawing constantly upon the past and ranging into every serious field of intellectual action. We wanted, actually, to revive the Aristotelian conception of politics, a sovereign conception that embraced everything, every interest, every event, every idea affecting the life of man in the human community. Even more, we wanted to bring to bear upon the special problems raised by modern culture the illumination of a valid spiritual and philosophical tradition, an illumination best described perhaps as the Christian world-view."

—from the EDITORIAL of the tenth anniversary issue
of THE REVIEW OF POLITICS, October, 1948.

Annual Subscription: \$4.00

Address the EDITORS,

P.O. Box 4, Notre Dame, Indiana

